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# The Support and Encouragement for Expression of the Circle of Courage Values by Special Education Teachers

Daisy Thompson

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**THE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR EXPRESSION  
OF THE  
CIRCLE OF COURAGE VALUES  
BY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS**

**by**

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**December, 2014**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my beloved husband, Gene, my four children, Christopherson, Jeremy, Jerilynn, and Micah, my three grandchildren, Krista, Jacob, and Heavyn, my parents (dad deceased), my great grandmother who raised me and put me in school at the age of five. They believed in me and expected the best.

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# **THE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR EXPRESSION OF THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE VALUES BY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined whether [or not] Special Education teachers were familiar with or utilized the Circle of Courage values (mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging) of Native American children with disabilities including intellectual disability in daily classroom interaction at three levels (elementary, middle, and high school). This study sought to examine the methods and strategies utilized by the teachers based on three research questions: (1) Are urban special education teachers familiar with the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence? (2) How do urban special education teachers support and encourage [or not] the expression of the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence of urban school aged Native American students in school? (3) How do special education teachers operationalize the values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

The study was a qualitative study utilizing naturalistic inquiry. Data were collected through multiple methods that included observations, semi structured interviews, and artifacts that included lesson plans and photos of bulletin board displays.

The results showed varying levels of support of the Circle of Courage values by the special education teachers. The high school teacher addressed the four values with his students from the classroom, school, and into the community. The elementary teacher focused primarily on the values of mastery and generosity with limited to no evidence of the values of independence and belonging supported beyond the classroom. The middle school teacher focused on mastery, independence, and generosity with limited to no evidence of the value of belonging utilized by the students beyond the classroom.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Overview

*“We believe the philosophy embodied in this Circle of Courage is not only a cultural belonging of Native peoples, but a cultural birthright for all the world’s children” (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 45). “Belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity are universal human needs. In a society that believes children are sacred beings, these become the birthrights of all of our children” (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 138).*

Rooted in Native American spiritual values based on “15,000 years of wisdom” (Gilgun, 2002, p. 68) is the Circle of Courage medicine wheel that represents Native American teachings about child rearing practices (Gilgun, 2002) and the concept that “We are all related” (Cajete, 1994, p. 165). Four elements: “belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity” (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 45) are integrated into the circle. With no beginning or ending point each element is interdependent with each other. According to Verbos, Gladstone, and Kennedy (2011), “Values work in concert to help a person travel life’s path with wisdom” (p. 18).

Every tribe has their own graphic representation of the Circle of Courage medicine wheel. Although each design is slightly different, the key elements are related to life in spiritual realms which include mental, physical, spiritual wellness and wisdom. Two Lakota men, Marshall (2001) and George Blue Bird, showed the different meanings the medicine wheel had for them. (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 45). Marshall, described the medicine wheel as the “power of life” (p. 225).

The medicine wheel is circular with a balanced cross of two intersecting lines in its center; the ends of the lines connect with the wheel at four points. The circle, of course, represents life, and the two intersecting lines represent the two roads in

life: the good road, usually painted in red, and the bad road, usually painted black. The good road is also referred to as the Red Road; it is the most difficult to travel. The bad road, the Black, is a wide, easy way to go. These are the two basic choices in life, and we choose one in every situation: the good or the bad. The four sacred colors of red, yellow, black, and white are included in the medicine wheel. (Marshall, 2001, p. 225).

Brendtro et al. (1990) recognized George Blue Bird, a Lakota Sioux, for the art depicted of the medicine wheel. Brendtro et al. (1990) stated “We were honoring George Blue Bird for his fine art by giving him the first copies, which were fresh off the presses” (p. 132). Blue Bird drew the medicine wheel while serving a prison sentence for an alcohol-related homicide. Upon review, Blue Bird stated;

This is a medicine wheel. Tribal people use the circle to show that all of life must be in balance and that we all must be connected to one another. The four colors - black, white, red, and yellow - stand for the four directions, and also for the four races. (Brendtro et al., 1990, pp. 132-133).

Brendtro et al. (1990) advocated utilization of the Circle of Courage by proposing “belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity as the central values - the unifying theme - of positive cultures for education and youth work programs” (p. 45). They also stated that the Circle of Courage medicine wheel “is not only a cultural belonging of Native peoples, but a cultural birthright for all the world’s children” (p. 45) and a necessary need by each human being from all walks of life.

The principles of the Circle of Courage are affirmed:

1. The Spirit of Belonging: the universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust so the child can say, “I am loved” (p. 137).
2. The Spirit of Mastery: The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, “I can succeed” (p. 137).
3. The Spirit of Independence: Free will is cultivated by responsibility so that the child can say, “I have power to make decisions” (p. 138).
4. The Spirit of Generosity: Character is cultivated by concern for others so that the child can say, “I have a purpose for my life.” (Brendtro et al., 1990, pp. 137-138).

Historically, many of the Nation’s laws depicted the values of the majority and contained exclusionary language related to Native Americans and African Americans. According to Tennant (2011), “The phrase ‘excluding Indians not taxed’ appeared in the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and the Fourteenth Amendment” (p. 13). Tennant further stated, the phrase caused much contention between factions of political parties and became embroiled in debate. *Standing Bear v. Crook (1879)* “recognized that Native Americans, although not U.S. citizens, still had individual rights protected by the Constitution. Despite the Federal District Court’s ruling, many government officials continued to disregard the rights of non-citizen Native Americans” (p. 10). Cases such as the *Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)*, *Standing Bear v. Crook (1879)* and the *Elk v. Wilkins (1884)* brought to light the controversies that were fought to gain citizenship for African Americans and Native Americans. The three “cases

wrestled with the effect of the phrase on the legal status of individual Native Americans” (p. 13).

The United States Constitution Article 1, Section 2 “...*excluding Indians not taxed*” separated Native Americans from the rest of the population. The history of Native Americans is similar to the history of individuals with disabilities. There were political attempts to segregate and annihilate cultures, languages, families, education, and people with disabilities, across the country. These struggles continue today. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) pointed out that “although tribal communities have a strong sense of the connections between education, sovereignty, and self-determination, these connections are rarely recognized among mainstream educators or educational policy makers” (p. 949). While individual self-determination is widely accepted as an important goal for people with disabilities, as a group they have not pushed for political sovereignty.

Changes in the laws have been slow, however, the Native Americans and the individuals with disabilities have been resilient and withstood the challenges until laws and legislations were developed to protect the rights of these groups of people. Feinstein, Driving-Hawk and Baartman (2009) stated “resiliency is used to describe the ‘human capacity and ability to face, overcome, be strengthened by, and even be transformed by experiences of adversity’ (Cesarone, 1999, p. 12). Native American culture provides a framework for fostering resiliency” (p. 12). The Native Americans were eventually recognized as United States citizens with the Indian Citizen Act (1924), or the Snyder Act. Children with disabilities received their rights with the passage of Pub. L. 94-142 Education of all Handicapped Children Act (1975) and currently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004. Similar struggles between the



Native Americans and individuals with disabilities pointed out that change for protection and extension of their rights needed to be recognized as a ‘people’ and as ‘citizens’ and not to be taken for granted.

The IDEA is one example of United States federal law that depicts the Circle of Courage values through its mandates for the provision of a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities; and affords the children with due process in obtainment of education and related services. The civil rights spirit originated in IDEA to provide equal educational opportunity. The following IDEA components portray examples of the Circle of Courage values:

1.     **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (d) (1)  
(A) **PURPOSES.** —The purposes of this title are—to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.
  
2.     **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** 20 U.S.C. § 1412 (a) (5) (A) **IN GENERAL.** – To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes

with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

3. **Evaluations.** 20 U.S.C. § 1414 (a) (1) (A) IN GENERAL. –A state educational agency, other State agency, or local educational agency shall conduct a full and individual initial evaluation in accordance with this paragraph and subsection (b), before the initial provision of special education and related services to a child with a disability under this part.  
20 U.S.C. § 1414 (b) (3) (A) (ii) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.-Each local educational agency shall ensure that assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child under this section are provided and administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is not feasible to so provide or administer.
4. **Determination of Eligibility and Educational Need.** 20 U.S.C. § 1414 (b) (4) (A) (5) (A) (B) (C) Upon completion of the administration of assessments and other evaluation measures - the determination of whether the child with a disability as defined in section (602)(3) and the educational needs of the child shall be made by a team of qualified professionals and the parent of the child in accordance with paragraph (5);  
SPECIAL RULE FOR ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION. -In making a determination of eligibility under paragraph (4)(A), a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such

determination is—lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965); lack of instruction in math; or limited English proficiency.

5. **Individualized Education Programs (IEP).** 20 U.S.C. § 1414 (d) (1) (A)  
(1) (i) Definitions in this title: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM. –IN GENERAL. - The term ‘Individualized Education Program’ or ‘IEP’ means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section.
6. **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA).** 20 U.S.C. § 1414 (k) (1) (D)  
(ii) SERVICES. - A child with a disability who is removed from the child’s current placement under subparagraph (G) (irrespective of whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the child’s disability) or subparagraph (C) shall receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral intervention assessment, behavioral intervention services and modifications, that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.
7. **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).** 20 U.S.C. § 1436 (e)  
PARENTAL CONSENT. -The contents of the Individualized family service plan shall be fully explained to the parents and informed written consent from the parents shall be obtained prior to the provision of early intervention services described in each plan. If the parents do not provide

consent with respect to a particular early intervention service, then only the early intervention services to which consent is obtained shall be provided.

Two Native American educators, Allison and Vining (1999) stated “The spirit of the IDEA is commendable; however, to accomplish the charges as mandated is monumental. The sharing of knowledge is the cornerstone to successful implementation” (p. 204). For implementation of the mandates as intended, there has to be transference of information between families, children with disabilities, professionals, administrators, and educators. They pointed out the need for transparency of education systems across the nation in the delivery and communication of educational supports to families, children, and schools. It is clear that the IDEA components portray the Circle of Courage spiritual values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence in providing children with disabilities the opportunity to belong, feel accepted, experience success at their level, make connections with their peers, share their learning with others, empowered to control their behaviors, and make decisions. The linkage between IDEA and the Circle of Courage values provide the impetus for the study.

The Circle of Courage values are intricately interwoven with the Native American culture which posits Vygotsky’s philosophy relative to sociocultural theory as the foundation for this study. Kozulin and Gindis (2007) pointed out that Vygotsky’s philosophy declared the development of a child stemmed from social interactions and events within the child’s environment. In another discussion, Ageyev (2003) questioned whether Vygotsky’s use of the term “culture” meant the same as “multiculturalism” or

whether Vygotsky was interested in “culture and culture differences” (p. 440) which could also be taken as cultural relativism. Ageyev explained cultural relativism.

Cultural Relativism is ‘a philosophy which, in recognizing the values set up by every society to guide its own life, lays stress on the dignity in every body of customs, and on the need for tolerance of conventions, though they may differ from one’s own’ Herskovits (1950). Cultural relativism insists that ‘all cultures are of equal value and the values and behavior of a culture can only be judged using that culture as a frame of reference.’ (Ageyev, 2003, p. 440). (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984).

The discussion showed the alignment of the Circle of Courage values to sociocultural theory and intrinsic to a child’s development.

### **History and Background**

Native Americans from across the nation refer to the Circle of Courage as a medicine wheel. Although the Circle of Courage’s design may change from tribe to tribe, the colors and the meaning of spiritual well-being remain constant. The Circle of Courage medicine wheel’s four spiritual values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence were utilized in the current research. Thayer-Bacon (2002) pointed out evidence of the Native American spiritual core values in the Navajo Tribe’s spiritual value of wholeness for an individual also known as *Sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó*. Thayer-Bacon added another definition “For Farella, “*Sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó* (SNBH) means completeness, that which is whole” (p. 16). Emerson (2003) described the word as “embodiment of the qualities of harmony, balance, happiness, love, and inner beauty” (p. 58). The sentiment is also shared by Locust (1988) who stated “harmony is the peaceful,

tranquil state of knowing all is well with one's spirit, mind, and body. To be in harmony is to be at 'oneness' with life, eternity, the Supreme Creator, and oneself" (p. 321).

Locust continued "In contrast to wellness or harmony, unwellness is characterized by disharmony. One cannot be in a state of disharmony caused by suppressed anger, frustration, heartache, and fear without sooner or later developing unwellness in the physical body ..." (p. 322). The results impact mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being.

Farella (1984) investigated the deeper meaning of "*Sq'a naghái bik'e hózhó*" relative to the Navajo people's stories of creation and life and found that "A Navajo uses this concept to express his happiness, his health, the beauty of his land, and the harmony of his relations with others" (p. 16). The English translation is the "Blessingway," a rite, which Farella emphasized "is the backbone of Navajo philosophy" (p. 20). He pointed out the Navajo philosophy:

Navajos commonly conceptualize and refer to their philosophical and ceremonial system as a corn plant. The junctures where the plant branches are the branching off of the major ceremonies. The "roots" extend into the underworld and, of course, refer to the pre-emergence stories. The main stalk is, on the one hand, a reference to *hózhóóji*, and, on the other hand (but really the same thing), a reference to the essence or the synthetic core of the philosophy. (Farella, 1984, p. 20).

Farella stated, for the Navajo, the goal is *hózhóóji*: "beauty, perfection, harmony, goodness, normality, success, well-being, blessedness, order, ideal ..." (p. 32). (Wyman, 1970). Farella pointed out multiple aspects of the Navajo philosophy that included stories

and songs about the emergence (creation) of the Navajo people. He continued, “for the Navajo, increase is the essence of life and of livelihood” (p. 46) which included: “the increase of the sheep, of the corn, and of the plants that clothe the earth.... The births of human beings...” (p. 63). Farella revealed that “Hózhóóji is both the creation of the things and beings necessary and valuable to humans and the plan or outline for their use” (p. 76).

The heavy emphasis placed on children was reflected in the interview of an elderly Navajo medicine man:

Our grandparents and parents have taught us that when you have a child with a disability, you should not disregard or treat the child differently. You are to love that child with your heart, mind, and soul. This is a child that has been given to you as a blessing from the Holy People and you are to care and love the child.

(Vining, 2000, p. 7).

In discussing Native American people’s understanding that they were born of the earth, Cajete (1994) stated that, “children are bestowed to a mother and her community through the direct participation of earth spirits, and that children came from springs, lakes, mountains, or caves embedded in the Earth where they existed as spirits before birth” (p. 83). To depict the view by Native Americans about children with disabilities, Cajete, retold a pueblo story about *Water Jar Boy*, who was born without limbs but was able to play and hunt as all the other children in the village. At the birth of the baby the young mother’s father told her, “It is a special gift, and although we do not know how this has happened we must accept it” (p. 126).

The preceding information established the value of children with and without disabilities through the lens of Native American people. The following sections strengthen the linkage between the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity and belonging with additional explanations.

**The spirit of mastery.** Brendtro et al. (1990) described the spirit of mastery as “striving was for attainment of a personal goal, not being superior to one’s opponent. ...Success became a possession of many, not of the privileged few” (p. 51). People with intellectual disability and severe disabilities have successfully executed the spirit of mastery as exemplified by Taylor and Bogdan (1980). They credit people with intellectual disability and severe disabilities as survivors of the eugenics movement since the 1920’s to the present. Taylor and Bogdan also contended that the work by these individuals has endured and continues to push for change in policies, national laws, and statutes (e.g., amendments of the IDEA 2004). Research have shown that people with intellectual disability desire “others” to see them as being capable and able as advocated by Bogdan (1980), Edgerton (1993), and Rock (1988).

Gilgun (2004) stated that, “persistence and a sense of self-efficacy are components of mastery, all of which arise from the support and guidance children and youth receive and accept from persons whom they value” (p. 54). In contrast, Gartner (1982) stated there is a tendency for “others” who work with people with disabilities and/or parents of children with disabilities to have low expectations.

Too often, those who work with disabled students offer compassion and even love, but do not expect achievement. It is this that makes a person who has a disability a cripple. Indeed, it may well be that the most important thing that



teachers can do is not only expect achievement from their students (and, of course, give the help necessary for achievement) but to ask of them that they help others as well. (Gartner, 1982, p. 15).

Rao (2006) revealed that Bengali mothers of children with disabilities viewed their child as normal and expected them to have responsibilities such as carrying out their community and social roles and fulfilling their family responsibilities such as chores, showing appropriate gender roles within the home and the community, and being able to conduct appropriate social protocol which included being respectful to others.

**The spirit of independence.** Brendtro et al. (1990) described the spirit of independence as “making one’s decisions fostered motivation to attain a given goal and responsibility for failure or success. The person answered to self-imposed goals and not to demands imposed by others” (pp. 52-53). Gilgun (2004) also highlighted the importance of balanced choices and their effect on others. The word “choice” carries much responsibility and can give feelings of “joy” as experienced by the participants interviewed by Rock (1988). Yet, the value of independence is rarely given to individuals with disabilities when the least restrictive environment is not afforded to them in schools and group homes. In a study by Rock (1988) six people with disabilities were interviewed in their institutional living environment. Rock found the value of independence by those “who relied on others for personal care and assistance, it was of prime importance in making them feel in control of their lives and the environment in which they lived” (p. 35). According to the six participants in the study, independence included five areas:

1. Risk taking: Being able to go out alone; Staying up late and putting oneself to bed; Cooking and possibly injuring oneself; Trying new tasks and developing new skills.
2. Privacy: Being able to lock one's door; Having one's own room; Space to be alone; Private room for visitors; Not on view to uninvited visitors.
3. Decision-making: Being able to decide what, how and when money was spent; Handle own money; Decide when to go to bed and get up; Not constantly asking permission to do things.
4. Organization and control: Being able to determine what tasks one can do for oneself; Being able to undertake tasks unaided; Undertake personal care tasks at own pace; Determine how own personal care tasks are completed; Being able to refuse entry to staff/others to personal room/space; Determine what TV/radio channels are viewed; Determine meal and bed times for oneself; Determine choice of menu; Being able to go to the toilet when one wants (not loo-queuing).
5. Encouragement: Being helped to maintain level of functioning for personal care tasks; Being encouraged to develop personal interests/hobbies. (Rock, 1988, pp. 31-32).

Van Bockern, Wenger and Ashworth (2004) advocated,

This is a time to begin to reframe our thinking. Instead of thinking, "This child does not pay attention," we think, "This child is curious about so many things. I hope I can help him become curious about the things that I love,..." Instead of "This child is antisocial," we reframe and think, "This young person needs our

help to figure out how he can feel safe with others and how others can feel safe with him.” (Van Bockern et al., 2004, p. 152).

Brokenleg (2005) promoted the idea that children observe and learn from the adults in their environments. He recommended that adults model “respectful guidance” (p. 86) with youth who have behavior concerns. Brokenleg advocated “All children need loving, caring, committed, and consistent adults around them if they are to bloom fully. We must become the extended family of elders and parents who once surrounded every child” (p. 86).

Havill (2004) and Pike, Millspaugh and DeSalvatore (2005) pointed out that giving choices to individuals promoted independence. Challenging behavior changed when students were given control over their own behaviors. The students tracked their progress with a paper and pencil process as they were encouraged to discuss progress with their peers or an adult.

**The spirit of generosity.** Brendtro et al. (1990) pointed out that “things were less important than people, and the test of one’s right values was to be able to give anything without the pulse quickening” (p. 58). People of all ages and ability levels possess a desire to feel needed and have goals, whether the goal is to become more independent by living on their own, getting a job, attending school, learning a language, and/or learning to cook. Gilgun (2004) stated that “generosity encompasses giving to others in multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things” (p. 55) as components of this category.

Begay, Roberts, Weisner and Matheson (1999) discussed the Native American concept of “we are all related” through the support of family (nuclear and extended) members in a community.

When greeting family members it is appropriate to call them by their kinship term. A cousin might be called “my sister” or “my brother,” an aunt is called “my little mother.” In this way extended family or clan relatives are brought closer to the family. Brothers and sisters are not greeted by using their given names but as “my younger sister” or “my older brother.” Even people who are not directly related but are related by clan are greeted that way. (Begay et al., 1999, p. 87).

Begay et al. (1999) also discussed that kinship and being related are practiced to promote the well-being of family and community members alike. The support from family is important to family members including: “borrowing vehicles for necessary trips to town or paying for gas money, helping with ceremonies, donating money or groceries, chopping and hauling wood, butchering and cooking, and attending meetings of extended families” (p. 87).

The quest for the spirit of “generosity” by people with intellectual disability is exemplified in a Hopi story about a person named “Bear” (Locust, 1988). Bear was the village water carrier until he was taken away to attend school. A Bureau of Indian Affairs social worker came for Bear. He became very homesick and began to display violent behavior while attending school. Because of his violent behavior he was locked up in a state hospital. After 20 years he was released back to his village to die. Before being taken away Bear had a purpose in life and he enjoyed his role within the village. Isolation from his community caused Bear disharmony and his eventual death.

Another story told by Crowe (2001) about her older brother Sam “Bubba” a person with an intellectual disability showed that people of all races desire the values of mastery, belonging, generosity, and independence. Sam had a happy childhood until he was institutionalized. His parents could not help him so they sent him to an institution at age 15. They thought professionals who knew more than they did could help their son. Sam remained institutionalized until his death at age 55. While institutionalized, Sam’s behavior changed from being a happy, loving and a content individual to having manic-depression and schizophrenia. He was moved around from institution to institution and became addicted to cigarettes and soda pop. These addictions hospitalized him several times and eventually his death. Sam desired independence, belonging, and to prove mastery through his behavior. He proved his competence; by finding his way home alone; he always knew how much money he had; and he knew when he needed medical attention. Sadly, the system failed him when he was placed in an independent living environment without appropriate training and supervision. He died within one month. He sought medical attention repeated times. But the doctors and nurses failed to treat him. Rather than treating his physical well-being they focused on his mental disability and referred him to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist administered medication that killed Sam, the medical facility refused to take responsibility. The medical organization discriminated against him because they failed to treat him for a physical illness as they would others considered “normal.”

Sam was happiest when his life was in harmony (e.g., generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence). He experienced imbalance when the Circle of Courage values were lost when sent away from home and institutionalized. The story about Sam

might have been different if the family was able to work out other alternatives. Sam's story substantiates the need for harmony and balance by all people. If one element is taken away from any individual it will result in disharmony.

In another study, Rao (2006) found that adults and children were expected to contribute as members of their society and culture. They took pride in giving back to their families and communities. Although the people with disabilities' contributions varied by abilities and strengths the community gave them a sense of identity and balance within their environment.

These accounts are evidence that people with intellectual disability and severe disabilities desire the Circle of Courage values with the same degree as others. They exhibit positive self-esteem and competence when they are successful. However, they suffer because those closest to them (families and teachers) do not listen to them.

**The spirit of belonging.** Tribal communities explained the spirit of belonging as, Kinship in tribal settings was not strictly a matter of biological relationships, but rather a learned way of viewing those who shared a community of residence. The ultimate test of kinship was behavior, not blood: you belonged if you acted like you belonged. (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 46).

Cajete (1994) also discussed the concept of belonging as being related to not only the immediate family and community but the environment as well. As he pointed out: "We are all related," is a metaphor used by the Lakota...whose meaning is shared by all other Indian people. It is a guiding principle of Indian spiritual ecology reflected by every tribe in their perception of nature" (p. 74). Cajete explained the understanding that

relationships are the foundation in which people learn, and “Relationship is the cornerstone of tribal community” (p. 86).

Cajete described mentoring relationships between young and old, plants, animals, and spirits as essential and described the community as:

Community is the context in which the affective dimension of education unfolds.

It is the place where one comes to know what it is like to be related. It is the place of sharing life through everyday acts, through song, dance, story, and celebration.

It is a place of teaching, learning, making art, and sharing thoughts, feelings, joy, and grief. It is a place for feeling and being connected. (Cajete, 1994, pp. 165-166).

Cajete (2000) further discussed the concept of community that included participation in one’s community as important because it teaches responsibility and strengthens tribal teachings. It “is the place where the ‘forming of the heart and face’ of the individual as one of the people is most fully expressed; ...context in which the person comes to know relationship, responsibility, and participation ...life of one’s people” (p. 86).

Skinner (1999) stated that “We do not exist alone. Community is important. All these lessons are connected to spirituality, which is at the center of our existence” (p. 122). Gilgun (2004) corroborated the concept that “belonging gives meaning and substance to human lives and fosters a sense of continuity and identity” (p. 54).

In a study by Beart, Hardy, and Buchan (2004), people with intellectual disability and severe disabilities revealed increased self-esteem when they began advocating for themselves after becoming involved in a self-advocacy group. The increased self-esteem

gave the participants a greater sense of identity that led to verbalized feelings and perspectives to individuals who had treated them unfairly. A youth with a disability recalled: “A young mother was rude to me (on the bus), because I’m disabled {...} She thinks I’m not capable. It makes me angry. I told her I was upset, gave her, a good talking to” (p. 96).

Initially, the participants were hesitant about participating in an advocacy group. It took one meeting to get them excited about becoming involved because they liked being included, which provided them a sense of belonging. The initial invitation gesture through a personal invitation demonstrated to the individuals that their attendance was important. After attending a few meetings the participants began to experience success. They independently pushed their own initiatives and received emotional support from the others. In addition they were seen as valued members of the community. As a result, they experienced respect. In return they reciprocated the respect. The research showed that identity evolves from the spirit of belonging by building respect, self-concept, and self-esteem. According to Holland and Lachicotte (2007), the question about identity evolves when one begins asking “Who am I? Where do I belong in today’s society?” (p. 102). (Erickson, 1968; 1980).

Horne (2003) a member of the Wind River Shoshone stated that “identity and pride are the criteria for success. An individual without identity is like a plant devoid of nourishment. It withers and dies. Possessing identity, we feel a sense of freedom from within” (p. 32).

Holland and Lachicotte further discussed the development of “identity as ‘a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal



culture...that answers questions of who one is and what one stands for” (p. 102). (Erickson, 1968). Kozulin and Gindis (2007) discussed the philosophies and advocacy of Vygotsky in the provision of social supports to the child with a diagnosed disability as necessary for the child to develop full mastery of appropriate psychological functions. Vygotsky advocated that all psychological functions develop interdependently and not as separate elements. This belief is substantiated by Brendtro et al. (1990) in their description about the values embodied in the Circle of Courage being interrelated and that each value builds on one another.

Forthun and McCombie (2007) and Kress (2003) advocated for programs that build self-efficacy in children with challenging behaviors. They observed that adults will often resort to coercion if they are not equipped with appropriate skills for behavior management. They also observed that adults rushed to make judgments about student behaviors that often led to weak or hurtful interventions. Forthun and McCombie (2007) identified appropriate professional development that equipped staff with humanistic strategies that worked for students with behavior challenges which led to productive behavior changes.

Malone (2007) and Boldt and Brooks (2006) found that showing appreciation for a person’s talents and skills build a sense of belonging. This became apparent when art pieces were placed strategically in conspicuous locations in a town. The artists were empowered when they saw their work around town. This concept is substantiated by Herman (2008) and Larson (2006) when the creativity skills of children with emotional disturbance were empowered and received recognition of their abilities.

**The spirit of IDEA.** The concept of IDEA is rooted in equal education opportunity for children with disabilities. Enacted to recognize and strengthen the civil rights of people with disabilities. The law improved services and programs in accessing educational support. When supported with the IDEA mandate, individuals with disabilities have experienced increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and recognition. In addition, there was greater accountability for programs and services and they had input about matters and issues that impacted them through increased legal protection. Various sections of the law including FAPE support access to general education for individuals with disabilities. They can experience belonging because they can attend their neighborhood schools close to home rather than institutionalization. In addition, the LRE also provides a sense of belonging and independence which allows individuals with disabilities access to the general education curriculum through inclusive practices. Identification for special services provides individuals with disabilities greater opportunities to experience mastery and success in their educational journeys. Many individuals with disabilities acquire skills in special programs and use them to succeed in general education and in life. The IFSP and the IEP provide opportunity to discuss individual strengths and needs with the goal of allowing them to achieve success at each individual's pace and ability.

Agustin and Keefe (2006) observed increased self-esteem and confidence by children with disabilities when they were empowered with the values of the Circle of Courage in their school. There were changes the school facilitated to help the students experience success and harmony. First, students were moved from portable buildings into the main building. Their classrooms were general education classrooms where they

experienced belonging within the school. The spirit of independence was instilled when the students were allowed greater autonomy to move within the school building and have control over their own behavior by tracking their positive behaviors. The spirit of mastery was experienced through the academy concept where students helped each other in the classroom and beyond. They took responsibility for their learning and shared their knowledge and skills with others in their classroom and school.

In another study by Harper (2005), the Circle of Courage values was used in a day treatment center to teach self-esteem and self-motivation to students identified as emotionally disturbed. The strategies utilized in the study included group dialog, “individualization, understandability, collaboration, and a connection to the future” (p. 153). The group dialogs gave the students opportunities to give encouragement, feedback, practice leadership skills, and to track progress. Individualization occurred when the students met to listen to others. The students understood each other and collaborated about the progress made by each group member. The process impacted each of the students in positive ways. As each group member understood themselves in relation to their progress, they were able to make connections about their future goals. This understanding impacted their academic motivation and self-esteem.

The application of the Circle of Courage principles have been found effective in alternative schools (Herman, 2007) and in residential centers (Lee & Perales, 2005). One such example was provided by Marlowe, Pearl, and Marlowe (2009) when a program was developed for youth with unmanageable and challenging behaviors. The program was designed to send identified youths into the wilderness for 60 days to develop appropriate behavior and leadership skills. The program assigned each group member

specific roles that were vital for everyone's survival such as night watch, cooking, navigation, collecting fire wood, and food planning. As the participants experienced the values of belonging, independence, mastery, and generosity they began to display appropriate behaviors that helped other group members. As the Circle of Courage values were strengthened, the individuals' self-esteem and leadership skills became more evident.

Brendtro et al. (1990) and (Brendtro & Larson, 2004) utilized the Circle of Courage to foster resiliency and re-establish harmony in children and youth who suffered abuse and were diagnosed as psychotic. Foltz (2004) also reported the benefits of renewed mental health that the Circle of Courage provided to psychotic youth. Coetzee (2005) emphasized "In addition, the impact of poverty, child abuse, and HIV/AIDS puts more children and young people at risk of manifesting challenging behaviour and in need of support in schools" (p. 184).

For successful programs, Reid and Ross (2005) found that adult staff members in foster care centers needed training to include youth participation in planning for their future. Curricula that encouraged youth to take control of their lives through development of plans, making choices, and to regain their autonomy were necessary. As youth experienced success in their choices it provided them a sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (Gilgun, 2004; Winter & Preston, 2006; Yamagishi & Houtekamer, 2005).

### **Problem Statement**

Manasevit, Plagata-Neubauer, and Winters (2007) stated that "the IDEA traces its roots to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and the federal government's first major

efforts to intervene and influence public education at the state and local level” (p. 3). The premise of the IDEA (2004); Title VII; The Civil Rights Act of 1871; Education of all Handicapped Children Act of 1975; The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities. The primary goal of IDEA is to maximize education opportunities for children with disabilities including those from minority ethnic population groups.

Harry, Rueda and Kalyanpur (1999) advocated that to maximize education opportunities for children with disabilities, life choices should also be included while obtaining a FAPE. Also emphasized is full participation of families in educational decisions for their children on the same level as education professionals. Kalyanpur and Harry (1997) pointed out that prior research found students and families of color have differing values from the mainstream society. Often families of color are not full participants in educational decisions for their children because of perception that power is associated with education professionals.

Luft (1995) further stated that minority families do not understand the diagnosis labels for special education because of differing values. Often the cultural barriers cannot be met with provision of a translator; the differences go beyond language barriers. Additionally, Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) advocated for professionals to identify their own values, the values of parents, and to acknowledge the differences. Rather than judging a parent’s child rearing practices, the professionals are advised to understand the differences.

In the study by Rao (2000), professionals labeled an African American mother as a “bad” mother because she often missed appointments. The mother did not attend the scheduled meetings because she asserted that her ‘voice’ was not heard and that the professionals did not validate her. According to Kalyanpur and Harry (2004), “parenting” practices are often questioned by education professionals when a child from a multiethnic background is failing academically. As a result, Kalyanpur and Harry (2004) stated that “parental participation in the educational decision-making process is lower for culturally diverse families than it is for mainstream families” (p. 531). They provided additional information:

Parents deal with additional inequities in their struggle with the educational system on two counts: (1) they are not participants in the critical discourse, precisely because they are parents and not professionals. (2) Culturally diverse families are further excluded because of perceived “poor parenting skills.” (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2004, p. 530).

Additional emphasis was stated by Kalyanpur and Harry for parents to gain cultural capital, which means being able to navigate one’s course in society as competent individuals: for example, navigating through the formality of the special education system. Often, parents obtain information through personal connections and social conversations, which isn’t enough. Kalyanpur and Harry stressed education professionals to assist parents in the attainment of cultural capital.

Currently, there is limited research on daily classroom interaction reflecting Native American students’ values of belonging, generosity, mastery, and independence of

students with intellectual disability and severe disabilities. This affected the limited review of the literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of Native American Circle of Courage values of, belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity in daily classroom activities with Native American children with intellectual disability and severe disabilities by special education teachers in a large southwestern urban school district.

This was a qualitative research design that utilized naturalistic inquiry as discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The goal of the research intersected appropriately with the 14 characteristics of naturalistic inquiry methods that included interviews, observations, documents (e.g., lesson plans, photos, bulletin board artifacts and projects) and member checks. To accomplish this goal, the primary research questions of this study were addressed:

Question 1. Are urban special education teachers familiar with the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

Question 2. How do urban special education teachers support and encourage [or not] the expression of the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence of urban school aged Native American students in school?

Question 3. How do special education teachers operationalize the values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

### **Underlying Assumptions**

I made two underlying assumptions in this study: (1) Human beings possess values and will generally act them out; and (2) Human beings communicate with one another with intent.

In addition, I found that (1) Mainstream values outweighed the acknowledgement of cultural values that children bring to the classroom; (2) Special Education teachers were unaware that they were utilizing cultural values through their daily instruction protocol and behavior; and (3) Special Education teachers were not familiar with the four Circles of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence.

### **Positionality and Theoretical Framework**

I am a Native American teacher with 35 years of teaching and administrative experience with certification in general and special education teaching in Arizona and New Mexico. The first five years of my teaching career were spent on the Navajo reservation in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools teaching third and fourth grade. The BIA is now known as the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). For the next five years I taught sixth through eighth grade in two public schools located on the Navajo reservation. I have taught all levels of special education in a New Mexico school district for eight years. I have also worked as an assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction and as director of federally funded programs on a Navajo reservation public school for five years. In my role as coordinator of special education, I was involved in a study on the Navajo norming of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children in a southwest public school district that served a Native American student population of approximately 80 percent. Currently, I am in my eighth year as the Director of Indian Education in a large urban public school in the southwest.



During my 12 years in special education (8 years as a teacher, 2 years as a program facilitator, and 2 years as a coordinator). I had numerous opportunities to observe classrooms and participate in IEP meetings. The IEP meeting participants often included principals, teachers, students, therapists, psychologists, Native American parents, and occasionally attorneys. The IEP meetings at schools involving Native American parents were often hurried. Sometimes the meeting chair would complete the IEP forms in advance. The main goal was to obtain parental signatures and signatures of school staff and others. I've observed parents informing committee members and school administrators that they (educational staff) were the experts. Therefore, they should write and decide what they thought was best for their child. I do not recall any discussion about "values" attributed to belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity during these IEP meetings. Some committees made genuine attempts to draw comments and input from the parents. The discussions centered on student's strengths and the parent's future plans for their child. Such meetings generally took more time for pleasant and relaxed discussions.

The Circle of Courage concepts of Native American spiritual core values is also evident in the Navajo spiritual value of wholeness for an individual. I was taught these concepts by my great grandmother who raised me. As a Native American woman and a member of the Navajo tribe, I was taught the Navajo philosophy and values known as *Sq'a naghái bik'e hózhó*. My great grandmother and parents taught me to be whole and complete. Taught from birth that I am a descendant from the holy people meant harmony and balance in my life. These are the same values I have taught my children and grandchildren.

## **Significance of the Study**

With the increase of multicultural populations in the nation there is an increased need for educators to be cognizant and knowledgeable about the values that the children bring to schools and classrooms. IDEA (2004) recognized this need in their amendment:

To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living; to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such are protected (20 U. S. C. §1400 (d) (1) (A) (B)).

Wright and Wright (2006) maintained,

(A) The Federal Government must be responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse society: (B) America's ethnic profile is rapidly changing. In 2000, 1 of every 3 persons in the United States was a member of a minority group or was limited English proficient. (C) Minority children comprise an increasing percentage of public school students. (D) ...recruitment efforts for special education personnel should focus on increasing the participation of minorities in the teaching profession in order to provide appropriate role models with sufficient knowledge to address the special education needs of these students. (Wright & Wright, 2006, p. 47).

The study focus is significant of its examination of the role of special education teachers in their support and encouragement of the Circle of Courage with Native American students with disabilities and intellectual disability. This study differs from other studies because of its specificity to Native American Circle of Courage values.

Relative to Native American children with disabilities Harry et al. (1999) advocated for professionals to

...cultivate a habit of examining the cultural underpinnings of the specific beliefs from which our service ideals arise....Through explicit dialogue with families, we then compare our differing beliefs and work towards collaboration that builds on family beliefs and strengths rather than setting goals derived from a set of values that may be alien to the people we serve. (Harry et al., 1999, p.125).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study is limited to classroom observations of three special education teachers and their support and encouragement of the Circle of Courage values through classroom management, instruction, and activities of Native American children with disabilities in grades K-12.

This study was not intended to evaluate nor critique the use of cultural values to the IDEA regulations. This study did not measure the appropriateness of the cultural values utilized by the teachers observed and it was not the intention of the study to provide solutions to activities observed. The scope of this study documented:

1. The classroom teacher's use and acknowledgement of cultural values: (belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery) through everyday classroom activities (e.g., lectures, independent seat work, collaborative work with partners, independent projects, worksheets, demonstrations/ performance, small group instructional conversations, and morning circle) by and with Native American children with disabilities.
2. The observations and interviews were limited to observations of three special education teachers.

3. Structured member check interviews were limited due to trends and contextual conditions of the participants' backgrounds.

4. Yin (2011) declared "You must learn from people rather than study them" (p. 136) and reiterated that "difficulties arise especially when a qualitative study focuses on cultural matters, as in societal cultures but also in examining the culture of places, such as institutions" (p. 136). (Spradley, 1979).

### **Definition of Terms**

To provide clarity of terminology utilized in the research the following terms are defined for this study as recommended by Fowler (2009).

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN). A federally recognized Indian Tribe: Any AI/AN, Band, Nation, Pueblo, or other organized group or community, including and Alaska Native village, as defined or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (Title 43, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 33, Section 1601 *et seq.*) acknowledged by the federal government to constitute a tribe with a government-to-government relationship with the United States and eligible for the programs, services, and other relationships established by the United States for indigenous people because of the political and legal statutes as AI/AN tribes, Bands, Nations, Pueblos, or communities (American Indian and Alaskan Native Policy of the U.S. Census Bureau, p. 1).

Circle of Courage values. A medicine wheel rooted in Native American spiritual values based on more than "15,000 years of wisdom" that represent Native American teachings about child rearing practices (Gilgun, 2002, p. 68).

Encourage. To inspire with courage, spirit, or hope (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 2004).

Expression. An act, process, or instance of representing in a medium (as words), utterance (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2004).

Native American. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment as cited by Native American Law and Legal Definitions from the U.S. Census Bureau Definition (n.d.). Native American and American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) will be used interchangeably throughout this research.

Realia. Objects or activities used to relate classroom teaching to the real life esp. of people studied (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2004).

Support. To uphold or defend as valid or right (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2004).

The Spirit of Belonging. The universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust so that the child can say, "I am loved" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 137).

The Spirit of Generosity. Character is cultivated by concern for others so that the child can say, "I have a purpose for my life" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 138).

The Spirit of Independence. Free will cultivated by responsibility so that the child can say, "I have the power to make decisions" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 138).

The Spirit of Mastery. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.137).

## **Organization**

Chapter One provided an introduction to the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence. The history, background, and

philosophy of the Circle of Courage as spiritual values and the spirit of IDEA are also included. The attributes of IDEA are interwoven with the Circle of Courage values. The problem statement and the purpose of the study targeted the use of and acknowledgment of cultural values of the Circle of Courage (belonging, generosity, mastery, and independence) in daily classroom instruction and activities by special education teachers. The underlying assumptions, positionality, and theoretical framework to provide the readers of this research with some insight into any biases that might be imposed during data collection and analysis was presented. Finally, a discussion of the significance and scope of the study as well as limitations were presented.

Chapter Two provides a review of related literature in four areas: (1) Sociocultural theory as a framework for understanding the review of related literature, (2) Review of Indian Education experiences of Native American children with disabilities, (3) Unique learning characteristics of Native American students, and (4) Understanding classroom actions through the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology to be used in this study. A qualitative study utilizing naturalistic inquiry to gather data through a combination of observations and interviews were used for the study. The study was conducted during the Fall of 2013 over 16 weeks (12 weeks of observations and data collection and 4 weeks of data analysis). Data was collected through multiple methods:

1. Observations of special education classrooms in three separate schools,
2. Interviews integrated with member check methods with three special education teachers,

3. Documents (e.g., lesson plans, photos, bulletin board artifacts, and projects) were added to triangulate the data,
4. Tape recorded transcripts were collected and coded.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the observations and the interviews.

Chapter Five summarizes and concludes the findings of the study with recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Overview**

This chapter reviewed four areas of research: (1) Sociocultural theory as a framework for understanding the review of related literature, (2) Indian Education experiences of Native American children with disabilities, (3) Unique learning characteristics of Native American students, and (4) Understanding classroom actions through the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

#### **Sociocultural Theory as a Framework**

Two indigenous researchers, Smith (1999), a Maori from New Zealand, and Cajete (1994) from the Pueblo of Santa Clara in New Mexico, created the sociocultural framework for indigenous way of thinking about ‘ones relation to one’s environment’ that encompasses and embraces the concept of “We are all related” (Cajete, 1994, p. 165).

Smith (1999) stated:

The concept of essentialism is also discussed in different ways within the indigenous world...the essence of a person is also discussed in relation to indigenous concepts of spirituality. In these views, the essence of a person has a genealogy which can be traced back to an earth parent, usually glossed as an Earth Mother. A human person does not stand alone, but shares with other animate and, in the Western sense, ‘inanimate’ beings, a relationship based on a shared ‘essence’ of life. The significance of place, of land, of landscape, of other



things in the universe, in defining the very essence of a people, makes for a very different rendering of the term essentialism as used by indigenous peoples.

(Smith, 1999, p. 74).

Cajete (1994) stated:

The Indigenous ideal of living ‘a good life’ in Indian traditions is at times referred to by Indian people as striving ‘to always think the highest thought.’ This metaphor refers to the framework of a sophisticated epistemology of community based ecological education. This is an epistemology in which the community and its mythically authenticated traditions support a way of life and quality of thinking that embodies an ecologically-informed consciousness. Thinking the highest thought means thinking of one’s self, one’s community, and one’s environment richly. This thinking in the highest, most respectful, and compassionate way systematically influences the actions of both individuals and the community. It is a way to perpetuate ‘a good life,’ a respectful and spiritual life, a wholesome life. Thus the community becomes a center for teaching and a context for learning how to live ecologically. (Cajete, 1994, p. 46).

Smith (1999) and Cajete (1994) portrayed the connection of Native American people’s view of the foundation for knowledge and wisdom as centered on one’s relationship with the environment of self, community and spirituality. Kozulin (2003) further stated that “Rogoff (1990) emphasized that the forms of human mediation directly depend on the sociocultural goals considered important by a given community” (p. 28).

The following is a discussion about Vygotsky’s definition of sociocultural development:

Sociocultural development is the changing cultural history that leaves a legacy for the individual in the form of technologies such as literacy, number systems, and computers, as well as value systems and scripts and norms for the handling of situations met by the individual. (Rogoff, 1990, p. 32).

Furthermore, Rogoff stated that people learn their culture, language, and values through their environment. Discussion by a sociocultural theorist about Native American children with disabilities stated.

In the development of the child as a social being, language has the central role... through which he learns to act as a member of a 'society' - in and through the various social groups, the family, the neighbourhood, and so on – and to adopt its 'culture,' its modes of thought and action, its beliefs, and its values. (Wells, 1999, p. 20). (Halliday, 1978).

Pitman and Maxwell (1992) pointed out that the constructivism paradigm is comparable to the interpretive and the hermeneutic theory that “meaningful constructions of individuals and groups, created through interaction, as the only reality that can be studied”... (p.738). (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). They defined the statement to mean that people create their own realities and are not dependent on the 'observer' for meaning and making sense of their environment.

Habel, Bloom, Ray and Bacon (1999) argued that social construction is exemplified in the attributes of the Circle of Courage and “that individuals construct their own understandings of the world through their interactions with problems, objects, and other individuals” (p. 93). (Prawat & Floden, 1994; Reynolds, Sinatra, & Jetton 1996). The ideas presented are applicable to individuals with disabilities because they are

constantly shaping their understanding of the world through their daily interactions with their environment.

Perceptions are formed as individuals interact with their environments as shared in the passage about Navajo mothers of children with disabilities and their claim that their children were capable of being “normal” if appropriate interventions were found.

This perception may be seen as being unrealistic and, perhaps, a form of denial, but the view is grounded in Navajo sociocultural perspectives and experiences.

The Navajo sociocultural explanation of disabilities among children fall primarily into two main areas: (1) Congenital abnormalities present at birth are usually linked to possible prenatal neglect, or abuse of tribal prenatal laws; (2) conditions which occur after birth during early childhood, are often seen as evidence of harm directed at the family by inflicting witchcraft on the most vulnerable family member. (Joe, 1982, p. 186).

Joe pointed out that the congenital abnormality explanation placed the blame on the mother and other close family members. It usually took time to help the mothers and others get over self-blame with interventions that included ceremonies, until they became well enough to take care of the child with the disability. However, healing ceremonies for the child were seldom performed because of the long night vigils involved. Joe added, close family ties and extended family members helped alleviate the work involved in caring for a disabled child. Therefore, Joe did not find any major barriers that were created for the families who had a child with a disability. In fact, Joe found that many cultural recognitions and celebrations related to baby milestones were recognized for the child with a disability. The milestones included

56% of the disabled children had their first laugh celebrated; 50% had Indian names; 43% used traditional cradleboards; and 40% had their umbilical cords buried in accordance with tribal custom. In rating cultural abilities of the children, mothers indicated that 83% of the disabled children spoke Navajo, and 63% could name their mother's clan. (Joe, 1982, p.189).

### **Indian Education Experiences of Native American Children with Disabilities**

A report from Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (1991) (INAR) hearings sponsored by the U.S. Secretary of Education stated:

Many of these Native students attended schools with 'an unfriendly school climate that fails to promote appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development among many Native students.' Schools also had a Eurocentric curriculum, low teacher expectations, 'a lack of Native educators as role models,' and 'overt and subtle racism.' These factors contributed to Native students having the highest high school dropout rate (36 percent) of any minority group in the United States. (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 314).

Included in the policies discussions by Warner (1999) related to Indian and Special Education beginning with the Snyder Act of 1921 to Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. Included were references to the impacts of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the IDEA (1997). In discussing IDEA (1997), Warner assured parents that they have an equal voice in the assessment and program planning for their children with disabilities, including equal partnership with professionals in the decision-making process. Warner also found that language barriers

have inhibited full participation in the decision-making process by Native American parents.

The policies of America's education organizations and institutions were contrary to the values embodied in the Circle of Courage as discussed earlier. History showed that American philosophies and policies have traumatized Native Americans and individuals with intellectual disability and severe disabilities. Both groups share tragic similarities that included forced institutionalization, dehumanization, and extinction practices. In addition, the Native Americans and individuals with intellectual disability have been degraded and labeled as deficits, imbeciles, feeble minded, lazy, monsters, savages, hopeless, powerless, negative self-concept, alienated, rejected, depressed, anxious, estranged, and frustrated (Bogdan, Biklen, Shapiro & Spelkoman, 1982; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Gartner, 1982).

The discussion about disfranchised population groups that include children with disabilities and Native Americans is affirmed in the statement:

Individuals from disenfranchised groups who may or may not have disabilities but who find themselves as part of the special education system (Pugach, 2001, p. 447) are rendered voiceless and powerless. Pugach concludes that context and multivocality must be inherent in conducting research in special education because the differences in the stories ultimately told can be explained as a function of the researcher's commitment to view disability within its full sociocultural context. (McCray & García, p. 599).

According to Spring (2008), the "eugenics and the age of sterilization" (p. 315) movement caused much suffering for individuals with intellectual disability and severe

disabilities. American policy makers developed policies to eradicate them through controlled reproduction practices. During the same time period, Reyhner and Eder (2004) reported about the “Assimilation movement” (p. 4). The Native American children suffered from forced separation from their families. They were forced into federal boarding schools even if it meant being moved across multiple states. Many children died while living in the federal boarding schools and never saw their families again. Many of the children were as young as five years old. The assimilation movement caused the Native Americans to lose their language and culture, which resulted in loss of “identity.” Reyhner and Eder (2004) reported that the slogan adopted by Carlisle under the leadership of Col. Richard Pratt during this period was “to civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. To keep him civilized, let him stay” (p. 143). Col. Pratt instituted the separation of families to speed up the civilization process. Similarly,

John Eliot argued that converted Indians, called praying Indians, should be separated from their villages and placed in small reservations called praying towns. Kept from contact with the ‘uncivilized’ life of typical Native American villages, praying Indians, according to Eliot, could become civilized. (Spring, 2008, p. 27).

In spite of the past practices which had negative implications on the education of Native American children, Brendtro et al. (1990) proclaimed, “the goal of Native education was to develop cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual competence. One of the first lessons a child learned was self-control and self-restraint in the presence of parents and other adults” (p. 49).

In addition other Indigenous people in neighboring countries were also

developing standards to support their children as pointed out by Reinhardt and Maday (2005). They acknowledged a Chickasaw from Canada, Dr. Ebnor Hampton's 12 standards for Aboriginal Education. The number one standard was *Spirituality*, defined as "respect for the spiritual relationships that exist between all things" (p. 44). In addition, Yellow Bird and Chenault (1999) recommended to teachers the importance of partnering with indigenous parents. One of the ways was to invite them to come to the school as guest speakers and to have them share their knowledge. Yellow Bird and Chenault further stated, "Indigenous-developed curricula is needed in schools. Cultural materials with positive portrayals of Indigenous peoples help Indigenous children develop healthy cultural identities and have a positive influence on their education" (p. 223).

### **Unique Learning Characteristics of Native American Students**

In her presentation of the curriculum from the Indian Community School (ICS) of Milwaukee, Warner (2001) shared the importance of linking indigenous values to a relationship-based curriculum to enhance the academic achievement of Native American youth. The values infused into the school philosophy were "love, respect, wisdom, truth, humility, bravery, and loyalty;" (p. 6). All of which were linked to the day-to-day decisions throughout the entire curriculum. These values were taught with the intended goal of students growing up to be responsible adults.

The role of professionals in meeting the unique educational needs of Native American children with disabilities and the impact cultural values have on learning was also discussed.

In the United States, studies addressing the views and experiences of different groups of families have yielded four key themes that have clear implications for

professionals in disability services: the fact that social groups construct disability differently from one another and from professionals, the differential expectations for childhood development and differential interpretations of the etiology and meaning of disabilities, the role of culture in parental coping styles, and the effects of any of the foregoing factors on parental participation in the special education process. (Harry, 2002, p. 133).

Kalyanpur and Harry (2004) and Jones (1996) informed readers about disability's social construction and its impact on multiethnic families. This was similar to the discussion by Rao (2000) that cultural construction of disabilities have different meanings for different cultures. The studies compound the need for a clear understanding about specific cultures' perception of disability, including the cultural environments and values that children from multiethnic backgrounds bring to the classroom. The concept is best explained by Kozulin and Gindis (2007) in their discussion about Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)" (p. 352). ZPD in remediation is explained.

Vygotsky's main premise was that a child with a disability must be accommodated with experiences and opportunities that are as close as possible to the mainstreamed situation, but not at the expense of 'positive differentiation.' This should be based on the children's potential rather than their current limitations. (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007, p. 352).

The child's early learning stems from social interactions and events within the child's environment. The correlation between the ZPD of Native American children with disabilities to the Circle of Courage values have direct impact because the values are



intrinsic to the child's positive development of self-identity based on his or her culture (Brendtro et al., 1990).

Teachers impact the development of children's lives daily, therefore, it is important for educators to recognize that all children with and without disabilities come to school with a set of cultural values.

Fostering a child's sense of belonging and ultimately his or her academic achievement requires congruence between the school culture with the home and community culture of the children we teach (Neito, 2002; Osterman, 2000). Given the lack of preparedness of a largely European American teaching force to educate children from diverse cultural backgrounds (Neito, 2002), English language learners and ethnically diverse children are at risk of being marginalized in our American classrooms. (Gilliard & Moore, 2007, p. 257). (Moll, 1992).

Teachers need to consider weaving in the academic language required for teaching as they also account for the home language that children bring to school. Too often teachers' view their roles as a balancing act as depicted in the statement.

Classrooms and clinics need not be the metaphorical private dining clubs ... in which Inuit come and are instructed to cook, set tables, and engage in mainstream conversations, while at home they have not traditionally cooked food nor sat at tables nor talked while they ate. However, if clinical and educational encounters are transformed into more relevant cultural events, are the children being placed on an ice flow unprepared to face the modern world, and its economic realities? Can cultural practices be developed as a strong base from which to encounter dominant societal practices? Is cultural duality in children a pipe dream? ... We

wish we had the answers. (Kovarsky & Damico, 1996, p. 311). (Crago & Eriks-Brophy, 1994).

Regarding cultural competence Dana (2001) described “the patterns of human behavior that include beliefs, values, and behaviors of a...group [are linked to]...the capacity to function within the context of culturally-integrated patterns of human behavior as a cultural system” (p. 450). (Schaller, Parker, & Garcia, 1998). Dana pointed out that evaluations of children for identification as at-risk or having disabilities are culturally constructed and normalcy is defined by cultural parameters. He advocated that service providers need cultural training about the beliefs related to disabilities. Furthermore, Dana found that 90 percent of the participants in a study that comprised of professionals were European Americans. 24 percent were counseling psychologists who indicated that they did not feel prepared to provide services to clients from ethnic backgrounds in spite of some relevant training and experience. In addition, Dana revealed the existence of biases in standardized tests, evaluators, service delivery, and diagnostic test outcomes. The biases that Dana identified stemmed from stereotyping ethnic groups, minimizing cultural differences between multiethnic groups, racism, and prejudice. The existence of cultural bias in assessments by psychologists was also found by Warner (1999). These biases caused over-identification of Native American children for special education and that there was a lack of trained Native American special education teachers.

Added was the impact of teacher expectation on the performance of children with disabilities and those from marginalized groups. Rose and Shevlin (2004) stated “Low

teacher expectations often resulted from an underestimation of a young person's ability or from stereotyped views of what was likely to be achieved" (p. 160).

There are multiple studies that point to challenges that teachers face in teaching multicultural populations. Many of these issues are related to unfamiliarity with the values and cultures represented in the classrooms such as language differences, cultural nuances, perceptions and lack of teacher training. Much research has pointed out issues related to language deficits and language differences (Salend, Duhaney & Montgomery, 2002; Peña, Quinn & Iglesias, 1992; McCloskey & Athanasiou, 2000; Oller, Kim & Choe, 2000; McCray & García, 2002). Another issue is cultural nuances which are not familiar to teachers (Crago, Eriks-Brophy, Pesco, & McAlpine, 1997; Arnold & Lassmann, 2003). The issue of perceptions based on White middle-class expectations and training has added to the challenges teachers deal with in their classrooms. (Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 2003; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Ladner & Hammons, 2001).

Studies show that both teachers and Native American children often experience language and cultural clashes. Two such examples are described by Crago et al. (1997) in a study with Inuit and non-Inuit teachers in Nunivak and the Warm Springs Native American children by Phillips (1983). One cause for the clash was behavior expectations by White teachers, which conflicted with culturally and socially accepted community norms. Phillips (1983) and Eriks-Brophy and Crago (2003) revealed that classroom behavior and expectations by non-native and native teachers differed. Another study by Drame (2002), also found that teachers who referred general education students to special education were not familiar with the culture of the child. Many of the referrals were for "negative academic, temperament and interpersonal behaviors" (p. 41).

Too often, these students are poorly served by special education practices. We place too much attention on assessment procedures and intervention strategies that are oriented toward mainstream American expectancies and beliefs, which serves to bias our teaching/learning encounters with students from diverse backgrounds. (Kovarsky & Damico, 1996, p. 311). (Crago et al., 1997).

Teachers are cautioned about placing too much emphasis on *how* a child responds to a question (Chamot & O'Malley, 1996). They attributed the child's reluctance to answer a question as either, already knowing the topic, or maybe the child is having difficulty with verbal expression. They asserted the reluctance to respond due to slow second language acquisition and emphasized the need for listening to what the child says rather than on how the response is communicated. Chamot and O'Malley suggested a variety of modalities to present information to children acquiring a second language. The modalities included the use of various modes of visual aids. They added that teaching materials should be culturally relevant and meaningful. They maintained that these methods will communicate value and respect to the student.

Phillips (1983) examined communication methods used by children from the Warm Springs Indian Community and reported how those methods differed from their White counterparts. The methods included behavior norms for getting recognized to answer questions. The Warm Springs Native American children were viewed as talking out of turn when they did not raise their hands to respond to questions. In contrast, White children raised their hands to answer questions posed by the teacher every time. Phillips concluded that the Warm Springs Native American students had a communication

system that was not hierarchical, but instead was spread laterally with much verbal and physical interaction between the students.

A study with Inuit children by Crago et al. (1997) and (Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 2003) revealed that non-Inuit teachers viewed the Inuit children as uncooperative, reluctant, disrespectful and displayed out-of-turn behavior characteristics. These views were based on White-middle class values. In contrast, the same study showed that Inuit Native teachers encouraged verbal interaction between students as they helped one another. The study found that Inuit native teachers rarely reprimanded the students for out-of-seat behavior because they were viewed as helping behaviors. In contrast, non-Inuit teachers emphasized individual work and viewed helping behaviors as cheating. They instructed the children to raise their hands to answer questions and discouraged others from speaking to the child even when the children were encouraging their peers in their native language. Students' responses were verbally corrected or overtly praised in front of the child's peers.

The results of the question and answer behavior studied in each classroom revealed that Inuit native teachers "incidences of overt evaluation that occurred in the Inuit teachers' classroom were generally directed at the performance of the group as a whole and were almost always positive evaluations" (p. 407). The study also revealed that "individual students were not overtly praised or corrected in front of the group" (p. 407). In contrast, "the non-Inuit teachers placed a great deal of emphasis on individual verbal participation and performance. In addition, they frequently responded for the students, sometimes waiting less than two seconds before supplying the correct answers to their elicitation." (Crago et al., 1997, p. 407). (Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 2003).

There is discussion about the manner in which teachers communicate with Native American students which often reflects their lack of sensitivity and knowledge of cultural communication styles. (Crago et al., 1997; Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 2003; Tharp & Yamauchi, 2000). For example, “wait time, the amount of time speakers are given to speak and respond, is substantially longer in Native American culture than in European-American culture” (Tharp & Yamauchi, 2000, p. 33). They further stated that communication barriers in learning situations are preventable if teachers and students respected each other’s values. Kovarsky and Damico (1996) recommended teachers to specify and interpret what they are saying when using interpretive language because of the literal understanding of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Phillips (1983) described White children’s classroom response behavior by raising their hands and shouting “I know, I know!” which is in contrast to the Native American children’s preference for group answers. Crago et al. (1997) and Phillips (1983) further observed that “fewer Indian students raise their hands to be called on and they do not verbally beg to be called on in the way that Anglo students do” (Phillips, 1983, p. 109).

Another study by Corson (2001) revealed differences on discourse of norms in classrooms and learning as compared to other ethnic groups as demonstrated between Navajo students in Rock Point, AZ and Hawaiian students. Navajo students asked to listen to the entire story before discussion. The Hawaiian students encouraged taking short segments of the story and discussing before continuing.

Mayor (1994) emphasized the importance of educators to determine whether a child is still at the stage of acquiring a second language or whether the child is still learning ‘a language’ before considering it an educational problem. In another study, Ortiz (1997) argued the need for instruction in the native language of the child as often as possible, while recommending to the teacher to understand the linguistic and socioeconomic variables’ impact on the teaching and student learning. Ortiz further emphasized “effective teachers incorporate students’ culture and language in the teaching-learning process; communicate value and respect for the students’ own diverse backgrounds; reinforce their cultural identity; and at the same time teach critical language, academic, and social skills” (p. 323). (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988). Ortiz included the importance of teacher familiarity with assessment procedures and the use of test data in teaching children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Another issue Ortiz (1997) pointed out was teachers from predominantly White middle-class lacked knowledge about multicultural child’s language acquisition.

Kovarsky and Damico (1996) reiterated the importance of language used in context of each person’s religion, family, education, and daily social interactions. They recommended to the teachers to consider the life experiences each child brings to the classroom with attention to cultural beliefs and practices. Kovarsky and Damico stated “We must remember that placed in political, economic, and social perspective, language is but one thread in a web of interacting forces that influence the outcomes of students’ lives” (p. 311).

Wells (1999) emphasized that children, during their early years, learn indirectly from those in their ZPD through personal relationships. Wells (1999) pointed out “The

child learns his mother tongue in behavioral settings... he is 'socialized' into the value systems and behaviour patterns of the culture through the use of language at the same time as he is learning it" (p. 20). (Halliday, 1978). Therefore, the importance of classroom activities that support and encourage the students to express themselves to others and build on the Circle of Courage values that they bring to school is paramount.

### **Understanding Classroom Actions through the Circle of Courage Values**

Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop and Villa (1997) recommended the Circle of Courage paradigm for inclusive education for all children.

The "modern" Common Core outcomes of *personal development, communication, problem solving, and social responsibility* interface and align with the ancient Circle of Courage goals of education. A critical characteristic of the goals of education represented by both the Circle of Courage and the Common Core is that there is not a student, with or without a disability, for whom the goals are not important or for whom meaningful and individualized learning outcomes could not be crafted. Stated otherwise, these truly are goals for *all* children. (Thousand et al., 1997, p. 271).

They further promoted the adoption of the Circle of Courage paradigm for school reforms with the statement,

Educators would experience enhanced personal and professional well-being and development, for the following reasons. First, a focus on *belonging* would foster the seeking out and celebration of the diversity and unique talents and interests of educators as well as increased emphasis (and time for) collaborative and joint creative problem solving. Attention to *mastery* and *independence* would



encourage school personnel to acquire new skills in instruction and assessment, as well as developing a curriculum that accommodates greater diversity in student learning styles and abilities. *Independence* would further develop from collective risk taking, problem solving, and the modeling of lifelong learning for students. Finally, replacing professional isolationism (e.g., teaching alone) with a spirit of *generosity* would foster increased sharing of skills, resources, and perceptions – and the development of a genuine community of adult learners. (Thousand et al., 1997, p. 283).

The discussion about developing workers and citizens as goals for America's schools was advocated by Peterson and Taylor (2009). They emphasized development of citizens in our nation's education system and proclaimed that it can be accomplished by changing its methods and strategies to 'whole schooling.' They supported the utilization of the values and the philosophies of the Circle of Courage values in whole schooling to bring about positive change.

Such schools nurture students in becoming adults who possess the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to become productive community members, leaders, and parents, as well as workers. Schools developing citizens are working to foster what Whole Schooling refers to as personal excellence within each student. This personal excellence philosophy espoused by Whole Schooling is similar to the Reclaiming Youth philosophy of 'demanding greatness.' (Peterson & Taylor, 2009, p.30).

They further discussed the concept of whole schooling as encompassing eight principles. Four principles are listed because of their direct correlation to the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence.

1. Empower citizens for democracy (Mastery). Teach students how to take responsibility for themselves and others, to solve problems, and to use power and authority wisely (p. 30).
2. Include all in learning together (Belonging). Education must include opportunities to engage students with diverse racial, ethnic, and ability characteristics. A truly inclusive classroom should include the following practices: All children and youth participate in classes together; Teachers intentionally engage students in heterogeneous groups...students with cognitive disabilities, gifted students, and a mixture of racial and cultural backgrounds working together on activities or projects at their own level. (Peterson & Taylor, 2009, pp. 30-31).
3. Build a caring community (Generosity). Community building in the classroom may include...buddy systems, critical friends, and learning pods; ...initiating reflective discussions, celebrating accomplishments, telling stories, writing, singing together, and creating slideshows of activities that the class has done together. (Peterson & Taylor, 2009, p. 31).
4. Support learning (Independence). In an environment of support learning, students learn self-management. Instead of the message of inferiority that can be imbedded in being removed from the classroom, students get the

message that they are responsible for their own learning in the same way as everyone else. (Peterson & Taylor, 2009, p. 31).

In another study, Yamagishi and Houtekamer (2005) discussed results of the Circle of Courage values when it was used to control anger outbursts of students. Parents of a student proclaimed that the values helped their son to refocus on goals. After four sessions with a counselor their son was able to articulate his skills and strengths through the four quadrants (belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence). The researchers found that the Circle of Courage values often seemed to “facilitate a willingness to be more honest, more thoughtful, more engaged, to own and be committed to goals, to care about progress” (p. 163).

The Circle of Courage values of mastery and independence were also used as the impetus for success academically and behaviorally with 14 and 17 year old teen-agers who were failing in school. The teens were allowed to work with their hands. They made pottery; played musical instruments, and wove as part of their program. The teens stated that while they were creating art, they did not feel anxious or angry because their thoughts were preoccupied with the product and the activity they were engaged in was pointed out by Herman (2008).

Physical education is another area where the Circle of Courage values were reported successful with alienated students by Halas (2002). In a school for troubled youth, the students regained school autonomy with their peers and adults. The physical education teacher found that ‘letting go of control’ helped the students participate more in their program. The students reported ‘fairness and equity’ when they participated in sports such as basketball and swimming. After participating in the program, team

captains no longer selected teams based on 'skill level.' Instead, participation by all students (skilled and unskilled) in sports became important. Rather than making disparaging remarks the more skilled students encouraged the less skilled students. The value of independence was fostered through choice by students and teachers. Twice a week the students chose the activity for participation and the teachers chose the activity the other times.

An individual student with behavior issues also experienced success as told by Larson (2006). An elementary aged student with low self-esteem and negative reputation in school was referred to Larson. The negativity caused the student to misbehave in class and towards others. Larson integrated the Circle of Courage values in the child's daily routine to help him rebuild his confidence with staff and students to allow the student to redeem himself. Larson integrated daily school routines with the Circle of Courage values that included (1) making deliveries to the office. That helped the student reestablish rapport with teachers and the office staff (administration). In addition, it developed responsibility in the student. (2) Mastery was gained through class participation where "saying no" or "non-participation" was unacceptable. This was implemented in increments of successful completion of academic work, and (3) Independence was reestablished during unstructured time (e.g., playground). The student was responsible for taking playground equipment outside and showing others that he could play without an adult supervision. At the conclusion of the school year the student was functioning successfully in school but still had to work on rebuilding his relationship with his father.

The commonalities and differences between two philosophies, Erickson's (1968) Psychosocial Life stages and Brendtro et al.'s (1990) Circle of Courage values are discussed by Coughlan and Welsh-Breetzke (2002). They found philosophical commonality about the development of ego. Erikson's philosophy supported the idea that social interactions developed trust. The philosophy was substantiated by Brendtro et al.'s (1990) stance for harmony "We propose belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity as the central values" (p. 45). However, there were differences regarding "relationships." Coughlan and Welsh-Breetzke (2002) maintained that Erikson's philosophy was centered on White middle class concepts of individuality and competition which impacted his views about relationships. Coughlan and Welsh-Breetzke pointed out that Erikson promoted smaller family units and perceived the "Sioux practice of shared parenting [as] destructive to a child" (p. 223).

On the other hand, Brendtro et al.'s (1990) concept of relationships was much broader. It included family, community, and environment as being intricately intertwined with self-esteem and self-worth. The concept supported the 'shared parenting' practices of the Native Americans, which were similar to the practices of South African families. This also supports the Circle of Courage value that "places a large emphasis on the whole community's role in rearing a child to achieve harmony and balance" (p. 224).

Another difference between Erikson's Psychosocial Life Stages and the Circle of Courage values was the development of independence (Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002). Brendtro et al. (1990) advocated 'independence' as "guidance without interference" (p. 53). Erikson's "inferiority complex" (p. 224) described behaviors that stem from role confusion and isolation caused by shame and doubt experienced by an

individual. Coughlan and Welsh-Breetzke supported Brendtro et al.'s concept related to discipline with "The focus is on developing inner discipline by providing children with opportunities to make age appropriate decisions so that they are not forced into being independent prematurely" (p. 223). Coughlan and Welsh-Breetzke emphasized the differences in views between the Native Americans and "Western White cultures where children are 'pressured' to become assertive and competitive at a young age" (p. 223). In the discussion related to mastery, Coughlin and Welsh-Breetzke pointed out that "success through mastery brings about recognition within the community and also inner satisfaction. Honor and mastery are received without arrogance and are not associated with 'winning' as in Western culture" (p. 223). Mastery developed inner discipline for "cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual areas of life" (p. 223). Brendtro et al. (1990) advocated, "...the child must first have opportunities to be dependent, learn to respect and value elders, and be taught through explanation for desired behavior" (p. 52). They explained attributes of generosity as:

A recurrent message was that the highest virtue was to be generous and unselfish. Long before he could participate in the hunt, a boy would look forward to that day when he would bring home his first game and give it to persons in need. Training in altruism began in earliest childhood. When a mother would share food with the needy, she would give portions to her children so they could experience the satisfaction of giving. (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 57).

Additional views about the value of generosity are pointed out by Brendtro et al. (1990) "members of the dominant culture who define success in terms of personal wealth

and possessions are usually unable to view positively the Native values of simplicity, generosity, and nonmaterialism” (p. 59).

Coughlin and Welsh-Breetzke (2002) reported "Circle of Courage sees generosity as integral to social harmony at every age” (p. 223). Another recommendation from Verbos et al. (2011) promoted teaching of Native American values as a curriculum in management education to promote and enhance an inclusive virtuous circle rather than the management style taught today in business schools. Verbos et al. (2011) pointed out contrasts between the dominant society’s management values and the Native American values. In the discussion, Verbos et al. (2011) identified the dominant society’s management style as “rational, self-interested, maximize self-interest, money, status, natural resources to be exploited for profit, individualistic, decision making made through formal authority, formal, based on title, hierarchical, efficiency, effectiveness, and profits” (p. 16). In contrast, the Native American management style included “generous, modest, contribute to well-being of family/tribe; respect and humility; nature as spiritual and practical; maintain harmony and balance; collectivistic; respect for elders; reflective, participative, based on use or communal, greater egalitarianism (circle), and provide jobs...” (p. 16). The push by Verbos et al. (2011) to maximize the benefits for management education through the use of Native American values was for increased teamwork, mentorship, humility, promotion of equality, and diversity, for sustained and increased attention to stakeholders’ concerns.

The Circle of Courage values also impacted interaction between adults and institutionalized youth discussed by Winter and Preston (2003). The staff at the institution realized that “communication” was the greatest unmet need in the lives of the

youths. As the program was implemented the staff looked for ways to provide support rather than blaming the students. The shift in attitudes of staff gave the students an opportunity to feel recognized in ways they had never experienced before. The changed attitude between staff and student brought positive behavior and increased quality time. There was also a renewed commitment to build relationships between the parties.

In advocacy for change in treatment of youth and children with behavior problems Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2005) have utilized a treatment model referred to as “positive psychology” (p. 130). The model’s focus is “shifting from fixing flaws to building strengths” (p. 130). The philosophy of positive psychology correlates with the Native American wisdom about child rearing and with tribal references to children. “The Lakota Sioux word for child is translated as ‘sacred being.’ Similar concepts have been identified in other tribal cultures worldwide. The Maori term for children is translated as ‘gift of the gods.’” (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003, p. 22).

Brokenleg (2005) stated that the present society is disrespectful to children and advocated that we need to go back to respecting children as “sacred beings” (p. 86) and declared that “to raise respectful and responsible children, adults must create environments that meet universal growth needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity” (p. 86).

There is also advocacy for children and youth who are seen as products of the Welfare and homeless systems by Seita (2004). He has pushed for youth to become leaders of the large institutions that served them to bring improved changes. Seita stated that the experiences the upcoming leaders had while being in the system would improve policies locally and nationally. He saw opportunity for increased and improved outcomes



of alumnae who are leaving the welfare institutions. Seita's success is attributed to his peers who have supported him and is viewed as an expert of 'resilience' by Brendtro and Larson (2004).

Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2003) posited the validation of the Circle of Courage values on positive development of resilience in children and youth by stating "to a considerable extent, resilience can be taught or cultivated. In that respect, adults bear direct responsibility for creating environments where positive growth and resilient outcomes can occur" (p. 23). They showed the direct linkage of the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and mastery to the four psychological survival needs of children also referred to as the "4 A's" which are defined:

1. Attachment. Healthy infants form bonds to those who care for them, and they smile to communicate happiness and love. These are not just learned behaviors, since they occur even with children who are blind or deaf (p. 23).
2. Achievement. All children also have inborn dispositions for mastery in order to learn strategies for coping with life's challenges. Children learn best from persons with whom they have positive bonds (p. 23).
3. Autonomy. While seeking to maintain attachments, youth increasingly strive for autonomy, in order to gain independence and self-reliance. Secure attachments provide a base for successful autonomy (p. 23).
4. Altruism. Persons reciprocate the care they have received as concern for others. Such generosity strengthens relationships between individuals, in effect, making them relatives. (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003, p. 23).

Brokenleg and Van Bockern pointed out another linkage with the statement “There is a close correspondence between the Circle of Courage and the nutriments of positive self-worth” (p. 24) which aligns with *The Antecedents of Self Esteem*. (Copperfield, 1968). Brokenleg and Van Bockern pointed out the four benchmarks used to measure the youth perceptions about self-worth.

1. Significance. Am I important to somebody?
2. Competence. Am I good at something?
3. Power. Can I influence my world?
4. Virtue. Am I a good person? (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003, p. 24).

Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2003) concluded that children need the following attributes including the Circle of Courage values, the four psychological survival needs, and the four nutriments of self-worth to become an individual who will possess a strong self-esteem, positive behavior, and leadership skills who will give back to others.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In summary, Little Soldier (1997) advised teachers in urban schools to support Native American children in their classrooms. In addition, he provided the information listed below to help teachers understand the Native American children better.

1. The “stature in the community is traditionally based on who you are as a person rather than on your material wealth” (p. 652). This allows for the teacher to be cognizant of the class dynamics to help validate each student. The validation establishes the student’s value of belonging, which shows that the teacher’s assistance in promoting of each child’s acceptance in the classroom is necessary.

2. The creation of a respectful learning environment is important for the student. This can be achieved by encouraging cooperative learning teams and sharing of new skills learned between students.
3. A warm, caring, learning environment is critical to supporting self-esteem especially for students who may be dealing with a recent move and or family situations.
4. Getting to know the learning style of the students in the class and allowing the Native American students to help others to reinforce support of the value of generosity.
5. Knowing “There exists a core of Native American values that includes sharing, cooperation, individual freedom and dignity” (pp. 652-653).
6. “Building pride in being ‘Indian’ is very important for teachers who work with Native American students.” (Little Soldier, 1997, p. 653).

In addition, Ingalls, Hammond, Dupoux, and Baeza (2006) strongly recommended that special education teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching for Native American students “Since this population of students has one of the highest referral and placement rates for special education services, educators need to attend to this matter and seek viable solutions” p. (16). Ingalls et al. added that “Culture plays an important role in influencing a child’s learning process and the skills that are learned. American Indian students’ cultural heritage often conflicts with mainstream school practices” (p. 16).

This sentiment is also shared by Noddings (2005) who advocated for schools to teach the child thoroughly and not concentrate only on the fundamentals of reading,

writing, and arithmetic. He suggested for schools to respond to the child's moral and social needs in addition to the fundamental needs.

As advocated by many researchers, the values manifested in the Circle of Courage are vital elements to include in the education of Native American children with disabilities. Discussions related to life skills are integral to the values of generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence as the researchers concluded that these values are core elements and necessary for Native people to maintain harmony within themselves and their environment.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methods**

#### **Overview**

This study was a qualitative research design that utilized the naturalistic inquiry characteristics discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which intersected appropriately with the intent of the research. Methods include the research site, participants, data collection methods, which included interviews, observations, instrumentation, artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, photos, bulletin board, and projects) member checks; data analysis; and assurances for establishing trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the following chapter, the research design and the methods are described to explore three research questions:

Question 1. Are urban special education teachers familiar with the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

Question 2. How do urban special education teachers support and encourage [or not] the expression of the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence of urban school aged Native American students in school?

Question 3. How do special education teachers operationalize the values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

#### **Research Design**

Webb and Glesne (1992) stated that “Qualitative research is not a single entity and not, as many believe, a mere synonym for ethnography. Instead, qualitative research is an umbrella term that covers an enormous variety of methods and approaches to the study of human behavior” (p. 773). Yamagata- Lynch (2010) provided another

description that “Qualitative research focuses on understanding and making meaning about a phenomenon in context (Merriam, 2009). It is an open-ended method with a rich history that accommodates to different types of research approach for professionals in many social science disciplines” (pp. 63-64). (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The research was designed to yield information about the Circle of Courage values as it relates to Native American children with disabilities and families and whether urban special education teachers had a role in helping the children with disabilities maintain their values.

The naturalistic inquiry research method was selected for the study because the goals and topic aligned to the characteristics recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Some ideologies considered during the course of this study were conducting research with indigenous people, outsider versus insider conflict, and cultural reciprocity. According to Smith (1999), indigenous research carries a social responsibility that the indigenous communities expected from the research process and results (with possible benefits if any) to be spelled out by the researcher. Smith also cautioned indigenous researchers that, as “insiders” beginning their journeys of research, numerous challenges face them that included “family background, status, politics, age, gender, religion, as well as their perceived technical ability” (p. 10).

Additional research factors that impacted the indigenous researcher were the research process, research participants, ethnicity, and issues of being an insider or outsider as described by Harry (1996) and Brayboy and Deyhle (2000). Harry (1996) emphasized the importance of the participant’s acknowledgement of the indigenous researcher. This means the researcher – participant relationship relative to ethnicity and

tribal affiliation. As shared by Smith, these created barriers for the indigenous researcher because people of the same tribe know “who you are.” This knowledge can determine if they will allow you ‘in’ as a researcher. Smith pointed out “that indigenous researchers work within a set of ‘insider’ dynamics which takes considerable sensitivity, skill, maturity, experience, and knowledge to work these issues through” (p.10).

Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) also shared the emotional and mental conflicts they experienced as “insiders” being Native American researchers conducting research in indigenous communities. As indigenous researchers, they struggled with the knowledge that they violated indigenous protocols: asking too many questions, doing things without being invited; and shifting roles during conversations with friends, researchers, and family members. Often they had to inform their friends and family members about the role switching.

Harry et al. (1999) and (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997) advocated for an effective cross cultural collaboration process between the researcher and the multicultural families. The process has helped practitioners differentiate universal ideals from the values of families. This has empowered parents of children with disabilities realize that their values were considered and valued by the professionals.

Calderón (1999) shared the belief that social interactions shaped and supported development of self-concept and identity. She further explained that, “Culture, language, relationships, and identity are interwoven. School experiences, relationships, and social interactions shape identity” (p. 4). The researcher suggested that school aged children needed support from peers and teachers who are knowledgeable about cultural tools and its role in shaping identities. The suggestion is echoed in the discussion by Brendtro et al.

(1990) that identity is integrated with the value of belonging. As children were valued and belonged to a group and community their identities were strengthened and reinforced. Brendtro et al. (1990) advocated the idea that children and people from all walks of life feel grounded and possess self-confidence as they become empowered with a sense of belonging and independence.

Harry (1996) cautioned researchers to be mindful about the extent and the degree of interactions with the participants. Harry reminded researchers, they are still the “observer” and the participant is still the “subject.” As the researcher becomes more familiar with the participants, areas to be cognizant about include:

1. Recognizing boundaries of privacy.
2. Drawing boundaries between research and therapy roles.
3. Constraining one’s judgments about participants’ experiences.
4. Preventing the occurrence of uninformed consent as a result of emergent and changing research design.
5. Recognizing that increasing intimacy may lead to participants’ unanticipated self-disclosure. (Harry, 1996, p. 293). (Daley, 1992).

Harry (1996) recommended an “examination of one’s sense of personal identity and the predispositions that prepare one for certain roles should be an explicit task of the researcher” (p. 294).

As recommended by Dennis and Giangreco (1996) professionals must recognize “their own cultural biases” (p. 110). They discussed that “Cultural sensitivity includes an appreciation of the family’s view of proper social behavior, the purpose of the interview, preferred language, issues of time and pace, and the information - sharing style that is



most comfortable for the family” (p. 109). The researchers encouraged special educators “to explore flexible and culturally sensitive approaches to working with families in ways that can enhance effective communication, build trusting relationships, and open the doors for important family involvement” (p. 104). Professionals are reminded to:

1. Appreciate the uniqueness in each family.
2. Be aware of the influence of your role as a professional.
3. Acknowledge your own cultural biases.
4. Seek new understandings and knowledge of cultures.
5. Develop an awareness of cultural norms.
6. Learn with families (Dennis & Giangreco, 1996, p. 111).

When researchers and participants enter a true, trusting, and sensitive working relationship, individuals with disabilities from all backgrounds will experience a bigger impact on issues that pertain to them as they project their voices together.

### **Research Site**

The study was conducted in three schools (elementary, middle, and high school) in one large urban school district in the southwest. The schools selected for the research had Native American student enrollment of more than 30 students. An additional criteria necessary for site selection was the school had to have five or more Native American students with active IEPs with 1-3 Native American students identified with an intellectual disability. The district’s Quality Assurance special education student’s data system was utilized to obtain the data. The study was conducted during school year 2013-2014 commencing in Fall 2013.

The elementary school selected as a research site had the highest enrollment of Native American students with 70 students of which 23 students had active IEPs as compared to the other elementary schools in the district. Overall, a total of 49 children with disabilities were enrolled in the selected school. The middle school selected as a research site had the largest enrollment of Native American students of 119 students of which 26 students had active IEPs. This was the most IEPs for Native American students as compared to the other middle schools in the district. Overall, 193 children with disabilities were enrolled in the school. The high school selected as a research site had the most Native American students enrolled at the school. There were 167 Native American students of which 26 students had active IEPs. This was the most IEPs for Native American students compared to the other high schools in the district. Overall, 219 children with disabilities were enrolled in the school.

### **Participants**

The identification and selection of the participants for this study was through purposive sampling method. A purposive sampling method is discussed as:

*Continuous adjustment or “focusing” of the sample.* Initially any sample unit will do as well as any other, but as insights and information accumulate and the investigator begins to develop working hypotheses about the situation, the sample may be refined to focus more particularly on those units that seem most relevant. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202).

The participants represented urban special education teachers employed by the large urban school district in the southwest. The teachers taught children with disabilities from a wide variety of multiethnic backgrounds in grades K-12. The special education

teachers were also referred to as participants throughout the research. The criteria to select the participants (1) at least two years of special education teaching experience in the large urban school district in the southwest, and (2) currently teaching in a school (elementary, middle, and high school) with an enrollment of at least 30 Native American students and teach at least 1-3 Native American students with intellectual disability. This allowed for a greater opportunity of selecting special education teachers who teach Native American students enrolled in their classrooms. Substitute teachers and student teachers were not eligible to participate. Potential participants did not self-identify, but instead the researcher contacted them by email and then by telephone. A meeting was scheduled with the potential participant at a mutually agreed upon location and time during the first and second week of October 2013.

The participants were state certified special education teachers, two females (elementary and middle school) and one male (high school). The three participants were Caucasian. The elementary participant has been teaching for 25 years and has taught students from many cultures throughout of the United States. The middle school participant has taught for nine years since 2005. Her original occupation was not in education, but when her son reached middle school age the school began calling her about various issues related to her son. She was missing so many workdays that she quit her job and got hired at the middle school as an educational assistant. She eventually became a certified special education teacher and indicated that she loves her job and will not change her occupation for anything. The high school participant has taught school for 35 years. Thirty three years were spent working with people with behavior disorders. The participant has taught Native American children with disabilities in prior years and can

still recall each one of them. In addition, he worked in a psychiatric hospital for more than 20 years. This was his second year teaching high school students with intellectual disability.

The three participants represented a total of 69 years of teaching in special education. The elementary special education teacher had eight students in the class initially. One additional student came in after the research began for a total of nine students. Of the eight students there were four fourth graders and four fifth graders. Six students were identified with Specific Learning Disability (SLD); one student had an identified Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); and one student with an identified Intellectual Disability (ID). Of this group there were four Native American students of which two were identified with SLD, one student with TBI, and one student with ID. The middle school participant had ten students in her class of which four students had ID, of which there was one Native American student with ID. In addition, there were three students with SLD, one student with Multiple Disabilities (MD), one student with Other Health Impairment (OHI), and one student with Orthopedic Impairment (OI). There were three sixth graders, four seventh graders, and three eighth graders. The high school participant had a total of eight students in his class of which six were tenth graders, one eleventh grader, and one twelfth grader. There were two Native American students, both tenth graders and both students with ID from a total of five students with ID. There were two students with OHI and one student with a Hearing Impairment (HI). All of the students between the three schools were ambulatory and had speech with one student at the middle school who used a communication device.

Table 1 shows the participant’s student enrollment in September 2013. (1) The overall enrollment of all students, (2) total Native American students enrolled at the school, (3) Native American children with disabilities enrolled at the school, (4) the number of students with IEPs in each participant’s class, and (5) the number of Native American students with intellectual disability in the participant’s class.

**Table 1**

*Student enrollment at research site*

	Elementary	Middle	High
1. All students	516	1,345	1,632
2. All Native American students	70	119	167
3. Native American children with disabilities	23	26	26
4. All students in participants’ class with IEP	9	10	8
5. Native American students with intellectual disability (ID) in participants’ class	1	1	2

There were subtle differences in the classroom atmosphere at the various grade levels in the three schools over a course of 12 observations. The overall sense between participants and students were rapport, respect, support, and partnership. The students were cordial and friendly to adults who came in and out of their classrooms.

**Gaining Entry**

Several steps were taken prior to identifying the special education teachers for the research and to gain entry to conduct the research:

1. Approval from the University of New Mexico (UNM) Human Research Review Committee (HRRC),
2. Approval from the large urban school district Research, Deployment, and Accountability Department (RDA) IRB Committee,
3. Met with the Director of RDA to obtain information and processes for approval and the appropriate paperwork necessary to conduct research in the school district,
4. Met with the Director of Special Education to discuss the study's application, scope, schedule, and goals,
5. Compiled a listing of the district schools (elementary, middle, and high schools) through use of the school district's Quality Assurance System for Indian Education data. Enrollment of Native American students at each school was compiled. Schools with enrollment of 30 or more Native American students were previewed for possible selection as a research site,
6. Compiled a listing of five or more Native American students with active IEPs with 1-3 Native American students identified with an intellectual disability enrolled at the school sites. The district's Quality Assurance special education student's data system was utilized to obtain the data. This information was previewed for possible selection of the school as a study site.
7. The schools (one elementary, middle, and high school) were selected as a research site based on the student data collected as listed on 5 and 6 above. Next,
8. Compiled a listing of special education teachers from each of the schools selected and reviewed experiences to determine eligibility at the research sites. The

teachers from each of the schools were identified through use of the district Quality Assurance System for Special Education data based on experience and student enrollment criterion previously mentioned,

9. Three special education teachers were selected as possible participants with one teacher representative from the elementary, middle, and high school.

10. Identified participants and principals received an email followed by a letter that introduced the researcher and scheduled a meeting (Appendix B). The letter to the school principals introduced the research, the researcher, consent, and reviewed the schedule of observations.

11. Obtained approval from the building principal at each research site,

12. Obtained approval from the teacher participant to participate in the research through obtainment of their signatures on the *Permission to Take Part in a Human Study* form (HRP 502) (the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form).

13. The school district IRB committee was assured that all pertinent identifiers of children and staff would not be shared and would not be released to ensure confidentiality and maintain compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations.

14. The schedule of observations were reviewed and agreed upon. The classroom observations commenced beginning in October 2013.

As entry for research is gained the researcher is responsible for a variety of personal characteristics and should be conscientious of his/her role that included:

- 1) Observed the participant's instruction in the classroom setting on each of the scheduled days,
- 2) Maintained role as data collection instrument throughout the study,
- 3) Possessed prior knowledge about the Circle of Courage values,
- 4) Utilized prior experience in special education,
- 5) Utilized current experience in Indian Education and knowledge about Native American research.
- 6) Aware of personal values that may influence data analysis of evaluation and interpretations.
- 7) Cognizant of possible interference from the participant's experiences.
- 8) Conducted observations as a researcher only and not as a participant observer at any time, to prevent possible compromise to collect "unbiased" data.
- 9) Data collection included observation snapshots and artifacts that occurred during classroom instruction during instruction in reading, science, and mathematics which were utilized in the research observation sample. Other observation data were also collected in addition to one-to-one semi structured interviews from each participant.

### **Consent**

The permission to take part in a human research study form was approved by each teacher on the following dates: October 2, 2013 (high school); October 8, 2013 (middle school); and October 9, 2013 (elementary school).

The idea of having a voice in issues that concern people with disabilities and intellectual disability including research participation validated and fulfilled the values of independence, mastery, belonging, and generosity advocated by Brendtro et al. (1990).



## **Instrumentation**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) determined that “the instrument of choice in naturalistic inquiry is the human,... the human is the initial and continuing mainstay” (p. 236).

Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended a ‘team of investigators’ as the best approach for conducting a study, this study was conducted by one researcher.

Additional instruments utilized for the study included an iPad, a camera, and a digital pen for note taking. The interview questions as recommended by (Spradley, 1979) form is presented in Appendix A. The iPad and the camera were utilized to photograph the classroom artifacts such as furniture arrangements, wall displays of student work, and student projects. The digital pen was utilized to take field notes and as a recorder during multiple activities in the classroom. The recorded information helped refresh information that would have been missed (e.g., teacher /student interactions, conversations between researcher and the participants).

## **Data Collection**

The study collected data through “the human instrument” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 240). Three methods were used for data collection which included a combination of 12 classroom observations of which, three snapshot observations were shared in each section by grade level. Although, all the observation data were analyzed for the research only the instruction in reading, science, and math were randomly selected and shared, (a) scripted observation notes with a combination of handwritten notes and audio recorded notes in three special education classrooms, (b) three digital recorded semi structured interviews with seven questions for each teacher including clarifying questions with two teachers in elementary and high school, (c) artifacts compilation that included lesson plans, photos of

bulletin board and classroom wall displays of student work, photos of classroom furniture arrangement, and students' artwork, (d) triangulation of the data through member checks were conducted with two special education teachers at the elementary and high school. The middle school participant stated she trusted the data collected and the information written so she opted out of the member check meeting.

Table 2 below displays the *levels of data collection* from each participant discussed by Yin (2011). The main topics of the Circle of Courage values studied were mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging. The broader levels (field settings) of the data collection are three special education teachers (elementary, middle, and high school). The narrow levels of the data collection methods are semi structured interviews, artifacts, and observations. Depending on the classroom activity during each observation, artifacts were collected with each participant at the elementary, middle, and high school.

**Table 2**

*Levels of data collection*

Main Topic	Data Collection	
	Broader Level	Narrower Level
Circle of Courage values:	Three Special Education	Semi structured interviews
Mastery	teachers (elementary,	Artifacts (lesson plans,
Independence	middle, and high school)	photos of student work),
Generosity		Observations
Belonging		

**Semi structured interviews.** This study utilized the semi structured interview method by one interviewer with three participants. The semi structured interview is described by Wolcott, (2008) as “semistructured interviews have an open-ended quality about them, the interview taking shape as it progresses” (p. 56). The research took on the semi structured quality because the questions (introduction and the clarifying) that were asked during the interview deviated from the original seven structured questions that were asked of each participant. The structured part of the interview is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as “the problem is defined by the researcher before the interview. The questions have been formulated ahead of time, and the respondent is expected to answer in terms of the interviewer’s framework and definition of the problem” (p. 268). “The structured interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer knows what she does not know and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find it out” (p. 269).

The semi structured interviews consisted of seven core questions and three clarifying questions from the elementary and the high school participants to obtain additional information. There were no clarifying questions requested from the middle school participant because she responded to the questions thoroughly and there wasn’t a need for clarification. The interviews concluded with advice from the study participants to other teachers with Native American students. The questions are focused on the values of mastery, independence, generosity and belonging:

1. Tell me about your experiences with Native American students.
2. What do you know about the Circle of Courage?
3. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “mastery” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up - Can you give

me an example of how you address mastery in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate mastery).

4. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “independence” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address independence in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate independence).

5. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “generosity” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address generosity in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate generosity).

6. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “belonging” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address belonging in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate belonging).

7. What advice would you give to another teacher who has Native American students in their classroom?

*Clarifying questions for Elementary.*

a. Do you provide instruction in life skills such as: reading a map or riding a city bus? Please explain.

b. Do you give students choices? Please explain.

c. Do any of the students participate in general education for inclusion?

Please explain.

*Clarifying questions for High School.*

- a. Please discuss further some of the topics you covered in class (e.g., What Is Special About Me, What I Like About Me, What Is Good About Me).
- b. Explain what happens at the hospital.
- c. Do any of the students participate in inclusion classes? Please explain.

**Artifacts.** Collected artifacts included photographs of bulletin board displays of: student work, posters of themes (e.g., courage, pledge, salutes, classroom rules, calendar agendas) and classroom arrangements of furniture.

**Observation.** Four observations were conducted with each participant for a total of 12 observations at a minimum of one hour each and a maximum of 1 hour and 15 minutes. The researcher walked around the classroom, viewed bulletin boards, student projects and lesson plans after each observation. Observations included: (1) the interactions between participant and students in their natural settings, (2) the cultural values (belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence) and their integration with prior knowledge and information that Native American students bring to school, and (3) daily classroom activities related to daily interactions.

The observation days were spread throughout the week from Mondays through Thursdays during mornings, noon, and afternoons at the elementary and the middle school. It was difficult to randomly spread the days and times of observations at the high school because the students had other classes in general education and volunteer days away from the high school. To fully implement the lesson plans, observations at the high school were on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:08 a.m. There were three rescheduled observations, one at each of the schools. The elementary and middle schools rescheduled

because the participants forgot the days for observation. I rescheduled one observation at the high school. Table 3 presents the observation schedule at each research site.

**Table 3**

*Observation Schedule*

Elementary	October 21	October 29	November 11	December 5
	2:30-3:30 p.m.	9:00-10:00 a.m.	9:00-10:15 a.m.	1:00-2:15 p.m.
Middle	October 22	October 29	November 6	November 18
	8:00-9:10 a.m.	12:00-1:15 p.m.	10:30-11:30 a.m.	12:50-2:15 p.m.
High School	October 15	October 22	November 7	November 26
	11:11-11:40 a.m.	11:08-12:00 noon	11:00-12:00 noon	10:08-10:44 a.m.

The study covered a school semester time line when the school was in session. The semester allowed for recruitment and hiring of teachers who were on board within the time period selected.

As an observer, I became minimally involved with the students and not with the research participants. The reactive observation method, as defined by Angrosino (2007), was used during the classroom observations. In reactive observation, the observer attempts to adopt the role of ‘complete observer’ and the participants know their behaviors were observed and recorded. The data collected during the observations reflected the descriptions of what the three participants were observed doing and not why they were doing a particular action.

Actions and behaviors of participant and students were observed during breakfast, instruction, circle time, unstructured class time, and consultations. In addition, there were

specific instruction in reading observed (e.g., SPIRE, Scholastic and short stories), mathematics (e.g., money, angles, and reading bar graphs), writing (e.g., paragraphs, journals, and sentences), and functional and life skills (e.g., appropriate social skills, personal information, emotions, and physical health). There were instructions about “self” that included positive attributes and characteristics and or writing about “good things” about one’s self perception. Throughout the observations, there were no “special” instruction time provided and special changes made to the agenda.

I conducted 12 observations over a six week period, with three snapshots of instruction in reading, science, and math reported in this research. Additional observation protocols that were adhered to during the study as recommended by Yin, (2011) included:

1. Explicit information to the location of the observation site with specific beginning and ending times outlined on a schedule,
2. Listed activity units that were observed,
3. Specified description of the research site (e.g., physical surroundings, visual and audio, desks arrangements, physical layout of the classroom, buildings, location of classrooms),
4. Specified wall and bulletin board displays (e.g., pictures, posters, drawings),
5. Took notice of routines (e.g., classroom, routines, and interactions with other people),
6. Collected and compiled artifacts; photos; verbal; pictorial data; human relationships; journals; lesson plans,

7. Feelings represented in the results as possibly important that could not be ignored, (e.g., noisy/quiet, pace, distant/close, congeniality, intuition), described the event as best as I can,

8. Took notice of others' time and mine,

9. Distinguished between firsthand and second hand evidence,

10. Triangulated the evidence by describing what I saw and heard,

11. Realized that "culture, the knowledge that people have learned as members of a group, cannot be observed directly.... If we want to find out what people know, we must get inside their heads" Yin (2011, p. 158). (Spradley, 1995).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined the advantages of the use of direct observation during a naturalistic inquiry study that included:

The basic methodological arguments for observation, then, may be summarized as these: observation ... maximizes the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like; observation... allows the inquirer to see the world as his subjects see it, to live in their time frames, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment; observation... provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively - that is, in a real sense it permits the observer to use *himself* as a data source; and observation... allows the observer to build on tacit knowledge, both his own and that of members of the group. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273).

To point out the complex integration of senses involved in the act of "observation" Sanger (1996) wrote that "It was not until 1980, thirty-seven years after



being born, that I first realized that there was a world of difference between seeing and observing. All those years I had found my way around with unconscious lack of precision...” (p. 1).

### **Data Analysis**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined, inductive data analysis “as a process for ‘making sense’ of field data. The sources of such data may be interviews, observations, documents, unobtrusive measures, nonverbal cues, or any other qualitative or quantitative information pools” (p. 202). Inductive analysis is discussed as:

When working within the naturalistic paradigm, however, the investigator typically does *not* work with either a priori theory or variables; these are expected to emerge from the inquiry. Data accumulated in the field thus must be analyzed *inductively* (that is, from specific, raw units of information to subsuming categories of information) in order to define local working hypotheses or questions that can be followed up. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) continued “Inductive analysis bears remarkable similarities to *content analysis*, a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit. Two essential subprocesses are involved, which may be termed, for convenience, “*unitizing*” and “*categorizing*” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203).

As recommended by Creswell (2009) descriptive analysis and coding were utilized for data analysis as themes and units were analyzed. Parameters and boundaries of the data collected were scheduled prior to beginning the study with the participants. The data were collected in more than one activity during an observation period and interviews.

An inductive analysis approach was used to glean themes which were related to the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity and belonging. The values were used to identify a myriad of interactions between teachers and the students (e.g., group work, peer help), communication methods, instruction methods, and instructional topics.

The Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity and belonging, were consolidated into five characteristics for each value. To locate the characteristics of the values a review of the literature from chapters one and two of this research document was conducted. The review showed each value had more than five characteristics as seen in Appendices C-F (e.g., mastery had six, independence had 11, generosity had eight and belonging had 18). To manage the characteristics, they were reduced to five as shown in Appendices C-F. The unconsolidated values for mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging were listed in the left column and the consolidated values are listed in the right column. The right column was used in the matrix to juxtapose data for each participant.

The five consolidated values for each of the Circle of Courage values were the same for each participant.

**The five characteristics used for the value of mastery.** The five consolidated characteristics of mastery included:

1. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 137).
2. The "desires to have "others" see them as able and capable" Bogdan (1980); Edgerton (1993); Rock (1988).

3. Achievement is expected from self and others (Rao, 2006).
4. The support and guidance that children and youth receive and accept from persons whom they value (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54).
5. Persistence and a sense of self-efficacy. (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54), Forthun and McCombie (2007) and Kress (2003).

**The five characteristics used for the value of independence.** The five consolidated characteristics of independence included:

1. Empowerment and decision-making manifest increased independence.
2. Encouragement from adult role models guide with respect and teaching of values instill independence (Brokenleg, 2005).
3. Choices give feelings of joy and a sense of responsibility (Rock, 1988).
4. Participation in community is important and it is “where the ‘forming of the heart and face’ is most fully expressed” Cajete (2000, p. 86) and Rao (2006).
5. Behaviors of self-determination, risk-taking, and self-control are built on trust and privacy including organization and routines (Rock, 1988).

**The five characteristics used for the value of generosity.** The five consolidated characteristics of generosity included:

1. Giving to others multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things (Gilgun, 2004, p. 55).
2. Promotion of well-being to family and community members (Begay et al., 1999).
3. To share learning with others.

4. To feel needed and have a purpose (Brendtro et al., 1990).
5. To have a goal (Brendtro et al., 1990).

**The five characteristics used for the value of belonging.** The five consolidated characteristics of belonging included:

1. To feel acceptance through cultivation of relationships built on trust. (Brendtro et al., 1990).
2. Acknowledgement of presence through greetings, being included and invited. (Brendtro et al., 1990).
3. Establish a sense of identity for increased respect, advocacy, confidence and self-esteem to foster, meaning and substance.
4. Connection to one's environment and community with a sense of "We are all related" in relationship with people, animals, plants, and spirits and kinship with all life (Cajete, 1994, p. 165).
5. Recognition and appreciation of one's skills, talents, and abilities to empower. (Malone, 2007; Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Herman, 2008; Larson, 2006).

The data collected from the observations, semi structured interviews with the clarifying questions, and the artifacts were analyzed for appropriate linkage to the consolidated Circle of Courage values matrix.

The semi structured interviews were analyzed in the following sequence: First, the digitally recorded transcripts of the responses to the seven questions and the clarifying questions were transcribed. Second, analytic memos were developed for each participant as recommended by Saldaña (2009). Third, outlines were developed from the analytic

memos as recommended by Boyatzis (1998). Fourth, the themes from the outlines were linked to the five consolidated Circle of Courage values matrix of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging for each participant (shown in Appendices J-L).

The observation data were analyzed in the following sequence. The observation data included (1) the interaction between participants and students, (2) lessons being presented during the observations, and (3) the communication of the participant with students, other service providers, and parents.

First, the observation scripts were coded utilizing the three columns process to make sense of the raw data as recommended by Saldaña (2009). The first column was labeled “raw data” The second column was labeled “preliminary codes” The third column was labeled “final code” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 21).

Second, the raw data from the original observation transcripts were outlined rather than using the final codes from the first coding. As the observation transcripts were outlined, information that had been left out in step one emerged. These were included in step two of the coding process. As recommended by Boyatzis (1998) themes emerged from the participant’s actions, words, and lessons during the observations. The themes were highlighted and linked to the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity matrix (presented in Appendices J-L). Third, observation data from the 12 observations were utilized, however only the three snapshot observations that were selected at random from each level (elementary, middle, and high school) are included in this discussion.

The data from the artifacts were analyzed in the following sequence. First, the artifacts were coded using the three columns process divided into three headings raw

data, preliminary codes, and final codes. Only photos and lesson plans that could be linked with the Circle of Courage values were utilized in the final matrix. Appendices G-I show a listing of the artifacts collected from the elementary, middle, and high schools. Next, the artifacts were analyzed for relevancy to the Circle of Courage values; they were paired with one of the five characteristics of the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity and belonging. Not all the artifacts collected were used because they were irrelevant to the values that were studied.

The analysis process categorized the data collected so that themes were gleaned for relevancy to the Circle of Courage values. The outlining of the data helped reveal information that had been lost in the three column coding and the analytic memos. The observations and the artifacts collected from each participant were analyzed and coded through two processes that included (three column coding and outlines). The semi structured interviews were analyzed and coded three times (three column coding, analytic memos, and outlines).

**Constant comparative method.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined categorizing as “a process whereby previously unitized data are organized into categories that provide descriptive or inferential information about the context or setting from which the units were derived” (p. 203). Another name for categorizing is “*constant comparative method*” according to (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 105).

The constant comparative method is designed to aid the analyst who possesses these abilities in generating a theory that is integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data-and at the same time is in a form clear enough to be readily, if only

partially, operationalized for testing in quantitative research. (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 103).

There are four stages included in the “*constant comparative method*” (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 105).

1. *Comparing incidents applicable to each category.* The analyst starts by coding each incident in his data into as many categories of analysis as possible, as categories emerge or as data emerge that fit an existing category (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 105).
2. *Integrating categories and their properties.* This process starts out in a small way; memos and possible conferences are short. But as the coding continues, the constant comparative units change from comparison of incident ... (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, pp. 108-109).
3. *Delimiting the theory.* Delimiting occurs at two levels: the theory and the categories. First, the theory solidifies... Later modifications are mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out non-relevant properties, integrating elaborating details of properties into the major outline of interrelated categories ... (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 110).
4. *Writing theory.* At this stage in the process of qualitative analysis, the analyst possesses coded data, a series of memos, and a theory. The discussions in his memos provide the content behind the categories, which become the major themes of the theory ... (Glaser & Strauss, 1973, p. 113).

**Grounded and emergent theories.** Glaser and Strauss (1967) are attributed with coining the term.

Grounded theory is one that will fit the situation being researched, and work when put into use. By “fit” we mean that the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study; by “work” we mean that they must be meaningfully relevant to and be able to explain the behavior under study. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 205).

### **Trustworthiness Assurances**

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of observation summaries, interviews, and the data collected (e.g., lesson plans, photos, bulletin board artifacts, and student projects). The observation summaries and the interviews were member checked.

The recommendations by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish trustworthiness were completed in the study.

1. *Credibility* was achieved through triangulation of data collected such as the semi structured interview, observations, and the artifacts. “The concept of triangulation by different methods thus can imply either different data collection modes (interview, questionnaire, observation, testing) or different designs” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 306).
2. *Transferability* of the information was conducted through the thick description of the findings and the discussion sections of the research. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).



3. *Dependability* was established by the repeated methods used for data analysis that included (three column coding, analytic memos, and outlining). (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318).

Changes during the study were recorded and discussed in the results section of the study. However, anticipated changes were dealt with prior to the initiation of the study (e.g., cancellation of observation, disagreement of observed and recorded actions during observation with participants, change in enrollment of Native American students that may influence the study). Establishing reliability of the study was difficult due to human interactions being studied, but can be established by the use of “consistency of observation, labeling, or interpretation” Boyatzis (1998, p. 144).

4. *Confirmability* was established through the use of the “six Halpern audit trail categories” as pointed out by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319).

- a. *Raw data*, including electronically recorded materials such as videotapes and stenomask recordings; written field notes, unobtrusive measures such as documents and records and physical traces; and survey results,

- b. *Data reduction and analysis products*, including write-ups of field notes, summaries such as condensed notes, unitized information (as on 3 x 5 cards), and quantitative summaries; and theoretical notes, including working hypotheses, concepts, and hunches,

- c. *Data reconstruction and synthesis products*, including structure of categories (themes, definitions, and relationships); findings and conclusions (interpretations and inferences); and a final report, with connections to the existing literature and an integration of concepts, relationships, and interpretations,
- d. *Process notes*; including methodological notes (procedures, designs, strategies, rationale); trustworthiness notes (relating to credibility, dependability, and confirmability); and audit trail notes,
- e. *Materials relating to intentions and dispositions*, including the inquiry proposal, personal notes (reflexive, notes, and motivations); and expectations (predictions and intentions),
- f. *Instrument development information*, including pilot forms and preliminary schedules; observation formats; and surveys. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 319-320).

### **Member Check**

Member check validated aspects of the observation activity during the study and also served as one of the triangulation points. Member checks were conducted with two research participants (elementary and high school) after the conclusion of the fourth observation at two sites to validate the information. The middle school participant opted not to member check. She stated that she trusted the information and the data collected. A meeting with the elementary participant was conducted on May 19, 2014 that included an exit meeting on the same day. The last research activity at the high school included an exit meeting on April 23, 2014. Transcripts of the observations and the interviews were

reviewed to serve as member check of the data collected with the special education teacher.

A summary report that included particular participation for site observations, interviews, and artifacts was shared with two participants to confirm the information obtained. The process gave the participants ‘voice’ to correct, discuss, amend, and extend the contents of the report as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Included in the summary report were information about their school, classroom, typical day at their school, dialogues, one observation, the semi structured interview, artifacts, findings, and advice they gave to other teachers. The following information provided clarity to member checking.

What is member checking or member validation? Silverman (1985) defined it as:

In effect, the member is asked to judge whether or not he or she recognises the sociologist’s account as a legitimate elaboration and systematisation of the member’s accounts. The member judges whether or not the sociologist’s account seems familiar in that it refers to, and originates in, elements similar to those in the member’s stock of commonsense knowledge. (Silverman, 1985, p. 44).

(Bloor, 1983).

At the conclusion of the fourth observation a review of the classroom activities and dialogue that reinforced, corroborated, and negated the observed actions was conducted with the participants. Reflection through use of a digital recorder occurred after each observation while the class and activities were still fresh in the researcher’s mind.

## **Conclusion**

This section concludes the discussion about the qualitative research method that included information about the research site; participants; data collection (e.g., interviews, observations, and artifacts). The artifacts included lesson plans, photos, bulletin board, and projects. There were also discussion related to member checks; data analysis; and assurances for establishing trustworthiness.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Findings**

This chapter summarizes the findings of a qualitative naturalistic study conducted in three public schools (elementary, middle, and high school) in a large urban school district in the American southwest with three special education teachers.

The study explored three primary research questions:

Question 1. Are urban special education teachers familiar with the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

Question 2. How do urban special education teachers support and encourage [or not] the expression of the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence of urban school aged Native American students in school?

Question 3. How do special education teachers operationalize the values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

The findings from the analysis of information were derived from the participants' classroom observations, artifacts, and the semi structured interview data which included experience with Native American students and knowledge about the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging.

#### **Elementary School**

The research began at the school after an initial meeting with the participant. The consent to take part in a human research study was signed and the dates for observations were scheduled. The observations were scheduled on different days and times during the school day to take advantage of the variety of activities and curriculum taught throughout the week. Activities included various aspects of the participant's instruction and non-

instruction time with the students. Two observations were conducted at 9:00 a.m. (one on Tuesday and one on Thursday) at the elementary school. The other two times were at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

The elementary school was established in 1953 and had been renovated recently and had an enrollment of 516 students. The classroom was located at the end of a long hallway from the front office and close to the playground. Upon entry into the classroom, located to the immediate left was a small kitchenette with: a stove, a dishwasher, half a wall of cupboard space to store cleaning supplies and food ingredients. It was apparent that cooking was a weekly activity although the activity was not observed during any of the observation visits. Among other cooking activities, the kitchen was used to bake birthday cakes for students who had birthdays during the year. I observed that a birthday celebration had taken place the day before my second observation because there was cake left over and the Native American student who had the birthday was still talking about his birthday the next day. The classroom had a horseshoe table in the center of the classroom closer to the east side toward the wall. However, during the observations, the horseshoe table was not utilized by the participant and the students, but it had much books, clothing (costumes), and boxes, on the surface.

There were 12 desks arranged into two sections with six desks facing each other. Student names were taped to the top edge of each. There were four bookcases arranged throughout the classroom. Throughout the day the students were coming and going for therapy and intervention classes in other locations within the school.

The participant with 25 years of experience has taught students from many cultures throughout the United States and stated that the large urban school district in the

southwest has the largest percentage of Native American students where her experience has been positive.

**A typical day in an elementary school.** The students arrived in the classroom each day soon after the morning bell. After hanging up their coats they went to their desks and took their notebooks out to get ready for the day's lesson. The participant talked about the weather and appropriate clothing to wear for the seasons as an activity for circle time. Then each student estimated the temperature outside with the goal of guessing the correct temperature. Students who estimated close to the day's temperature shouted with a "yeah with excitement!" as the other students clapped. After this activity came the Pledge of Allegiance recital in English and Spanish led by the participant. The New Mexico flag salute followed: *I salute the flag of the state of New Mexico, the Zia symbol of perfect friendship among united cultures*, and ended with the Samurai Lobo Mission: *To work hard and to learn by doing our work, being brave, speaking up, and never giving up.*

Afterwards the students were informed of the work they would be doing in reading or math and story time. I had the opportunity to observe one of each lesson. The participant introduced each lesson with a review of the previous lesson and explained the areas that would be covered at the start of each new lesson. The teacher began instructions; each lesson lasted 20-30 minutes. These lessons were conducted with the participant either sitting down on a chair or standing next to the white board. The students were engaged the entire time. Often the teacher assistant took 3-4 students and the participant worked with the remaining 5-6 students. At the conclusion of the lessons the

students took a break to go outside, bathroom, another classroom or to speech or physical therapy.

**Dialogues.** There were many discussions by the participant during the lessons. The students listened to directions or to other's responses to various questions posed. The students often would get out of their seats and began walking back and forth or talked to their peers. Most of the time they walked up to the participant to either show their work or requested help. Below is a snapshot of a typical reading lesson by the participant at the elementary school with a group of six students (5 boys and 1 girl).

**Observation of an elementary reading lesson.** This section depicts a one hour snapshot of a reading lesson with nine students by one teacher and one assistant on October 29, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. There was also one observer present.

Participant: Discussing appropriate dress for the cold weather and then a discussion about bravery.

Participant: Bravery means to do something even when you are scared and when you are on your own. Even if you think: "Oh My Gosh," My friends are going to laugh at me and they are going to tease me and I am going to feel dumb. You still have to do it because you are practicing something. Just because your friends think something, it doesn't make it true. You have to be brave or lose. I don't mind that you don't get it right.

Participant: This is going to surprise you and what you estimated. What was the temperature outside today? Was it? 47, 56, or 85 degrees. Was it 48 degrees Fahrenheit outside? I have to tell you that it surprised me. Today was 51 degrees Fahrenheit outside. Yesterday, it was 47 degrees and it actually felt warmer, unless my computer is tricking me. Please put your agendas away. Be sure you record today's temperature. You are like a scientist because you are recording the actual temperature.

Observer: Good Morning, I brought some Halloween treats for you.

Participant to students: I know you are upset with me but it doesn't mean you need to be disrespectful to me. I don't know why you are upset with me. You are going to have a great day.



All: Pledge recital by all in two languages English and Spanish. Afterwards the class started lessons.

Participant: I forgot you (observer) were coming. We can do SPIRE later. SPIRE is pretty awful, so we will do something else. (I told the participant she did not need to change her reading lesson and that a reading observation was fine).

The participant divided the class into two groups. She took the larger group of six students and assigned the remaining three students to the assistant to review the lesson from the day before.

SPIRE Group Three: (six students working with participant)

Participant: There were three students absent yesterday so we are regrouping today.

Classroom: (Costumes, a black pot, skeleton, and tickets) are on the horseshoe table as evidence of a Halloween carnival at the school.

Students and participant are setting up their groups and getting ready to read.

Student: Are we doing the same activity from yesterday?

Participant: Student can I change places with you?

SPIRE Reading Group Three.

Participant to a student: Have you done SPIRE, at your other school? Or did you come in the middle of the year?

Participant: I don't want you looking around. Because there are many letters and sounds we will be learning. I want you to use your strong voice. Be careful: just say the words, letters and sounds.

Participant: Doing flashcards. When you say "B" say it as (demonstrated) "b."

Participant: "Vowels" how are vowels different? There are short and long vowels. They have lots of voices. They are very important and I want all of you to pay attention.

Assistant worked with three students.

The group reviewed their reading and stories from the day before. Both groups are sitting side by side at the two rows of desks facing each other. Both groups are: talking, reading, and listening simultaneously.

One student in the larger group has a cold and needs a tissue.

Student: May I get a tissue?

Participant: Yes, go ahead and get a tissue.

Participant and students: (Together) they complete the single letters and sounds and now begin the teams of letters, (e.g., ie, wh, th (thin or that), ch (these sounds go together), tch, onk,)-makes a short or long sound. It makes a short sound.

Participant: A yellow letter means caution. ink, ank, ling, ong, ll (here is our friend), ff, Ss, ll, (if in the middle of a word you will say both letters (e.g., muffin). I know you are so good at sounding out letters. What kind of sound will it make if it is at the end of a word?

Participant: How do I write “fluffy?” How do I write (e.g., miss, I miss you when you are gone).

Participant was demonstrating the written word to the students and discussing what she was doing at the same time.

Participant: There are three ways to spell “c.” If I write cat, what letter would I use? c or ck?

Participant: (To a student) Looks you have a scratch. Did you scratch yourself?

Participant: Next word. "Pull"

Participant says to a student. “Are you so tired that your head is so heavy that you cannot hold it up?” When I am tired, I can hardly keep my eyes open sometimes.

Participant: Red color means that it is a word you cannot sound out. You just have to know this rule because there are no rules to follow with these words.

Participant to student: I noticed you are an excellent reader, but when it comes to nonsense words, your brain can't figure it out.

Participant: (says to students) “Men” there are five young men here at our table. But, if I had an “a” here, the word would be man. Let’s say these words together: Fun, bug, soft, lost, stop, free, tall.

Participant to student: Since you turned 11 yesterday...

Student: finished the sentence with, “I've been talking too much.”

Participant: The end words mean that you can sound it out. Let’s look at the next words, how would you sound it out?”

Participant and students: Pick, truck, you, who, into, of, said, what, to, (is this number 2?), two, too. "I want to go, too.”

Participant: Which to, too, two would you use? Which to do I write? "I want to go, too."  
Next activity is dictation.

Participant: We will do our dictation first. We are doing some things differently, so listen carefully. Write your first name and last name, we will write out the date as October 29, 2013, underneath the date, "write Tuesday." We are going to use both sides of the paper. Use the letters side and not the side for sentences.

Student: "Do I capitalize my name?"

Participant: Why would you capitalize your name? You would capitalize your name because it is a pronoun.

Participant: The way dictation works is that you are really practicing your writing. Practice your letters and the sound. Please look around and help those who need help.

Participant: Use the correct side of your paper. We need you to write the days of the week. We spelled those and we did not do so well. So we'll practice them again.

Participant: I will give you the sounds and say them two times. Please listen carefully. I will say them and give you time to write them and I will say them again. Do your very best. Listen and write it down quickly, because I will not repeat.

Participant: The first sound is "a" short a, the second sound is short "o," the fourth sound is short "i," and the fifth sound is "e" and sixth sound is "ink."

Student: "I am marking everything wrong."

Participant continued: The seventh sound "onk," eighth sound "ga," ninth sound "d," and tenth sound is "i."

Participant: If you missed some, you missed them.

Participant: #1 for words, "six," #2 "must," #3 "wash," #4 "pull," "Pull the door close," #5 "went," #6 "you," #7 "such," #8 "skunk," #9 "watch," and #10 "said."

Participant: I gave you some vowels, some tricky consonants, and some words. We are going to do just two sentences on the back. We do this to practice writing sentences.

Participant: The first sentence.

1. The ball went to the fence. I want you to look to make sure to start with a capital and end with the right punctuation. The first letter should be capitalized and nothing else in the sentence should be capitalized.

2. Beth had lunch with Chad.

Student: Beth had lunch with Chad. (A student finished the sentence slightly before the participant).

Participant: The first letter in the first sentence should be capitalized and nothing else in that sentence should be capitalized.

Participant: What is Chad?

Student: It is a kid.

Participant: Chad is a name so it needs to be capitalized. It is a proper noun so it needs to be capitalized.

Participant: I am going to have you edit your work using the colored pencils. We are not going to have you exchange your papers to edit it, not today. Now you have the correct writing sample.

Participant: This is practice writing and I am not grading these. I want you to practice writing these.

Participant: Put your pencils away and pass your papers to the front.

Participant: Line up at the door and wait.

Student: My mom is at the hospital. She had surgery.

**Semi structured interview at the elementary.** There were seven questions specific to the research and three additional clarification questions. To begin the interview, the participant was asked to briefly state information about her experiences as an introduction. The interview responses were analyzed and condensed by an *analytic memo* as advised by Saldaña (2009) and then outlined for added review as recommended by Boyatzis (1998).

Question 1: Tell me more about your experiences with Native American students.

Response: The participant valued the diversity which has brought a dimension into her classroom that has transcended her, the students, and their parents and grandparents, including all people who are born and raised in the state. However, the participant did not specifically address her experience with Native American children with disabilities other than that it has been “positive.”

Question 2: What do you know about the Circle of Courage?

Response: Participant knew very little about the Circle of Courage values but she has taught them under a different label. She implemented values that were important to her and accepts other values as well.

Question 3: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “mastery” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up - Can you give me an example of how you address mastery in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate mastery).

Response: Mastery was being able to achieve academically using the standards. Scores between 80-100 percent were indicators of mastery. It was a skill that the students have received instruction in and mastery was not just behavior or effort.

Participant taught mastery through the following methods;

- a. Common Core standards,
- b. Account Item Awards System (e.g., star scorers, star tickets),
- c. Prizes,
- d. Assessments (e.g., test booklets and lesson tests),
- e. Rubrics, report cards, drawings, postings of exemplars,
- f. Discussions with students for consensus on assessments,

- g. Functional skills, and
- h. Academic skills with a focus on addition and subtraction.

Clarifying question 1: Do you provide instruction in life skills such as reading a map or riding a city bus? Please explain.

Response: The life skills taught were:

- a. Field trips to (e.g., city hall and agriculture),
- b. Learned to navigate their community through use of reference points and to build reference points,
- c. Rode the city bus,
- d. Built vocabulary words through use of themes (harvest, fruits, vegetables, and agriculture),
- e. Cooking,
- f. Art work, and
- g. Community based activities for increased creativity and communication skills.

Participant stated that the students had little experience with travel and needed help with learning to navigate their community.

Question 4: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “independence” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address independence in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate independence).

Response: Independence was having self-advocacy skills. The participant taught independence through the following strategies:

- a. Sharing learned skills with others,
- b. Self-advocacy skills (e.g., “Stop, I don’t like it when you…” in a voice that others can hear),
- c. Listening (e.g., hear what they are saying),
- d. Provide support,
- e. Provide routines, structure, and organization,
- f. Build responsibility, and
- g. Build on learned skills and concepts.

Participant stated that many of the students have been in the special education system for so long that they have learned helplessness.

Clarifying question 2: Do you give students choices? Please explain.

Response: Participant’s goal was to move students forward rather than holding them back and she provided choices to them. Choices helped students in the following ways;

- a. Empowerment,
- b. Responsibility,
- c. Making good decisions,
- d. Prioritizing skills,
- e. Heavy structure (e.g., direct instruction),
- f. Visual cues,
- g. Dignity, and
- h. Accountability (e.g., incentives).

Question 5: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “generosity” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address generosity in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate generosity).

Response: Generosity was in the projects and things the students generated and the kindness they showed. It was the giving of their mature qualities (e.g., emotions and awareness) and their guidance. Participant taught generosity through the following methods.

- a. Teamwork,
- b. Taking care of self, others, and community (e.g., looking out and taking care of one another),
- c. Collaborative art projects (e.g., cards, Ojos, flag, place mats, wreaths, baked breads, and door napkins),
- d. Community outreach (e.g., gave to the veterans, parishes, and the homeless, to hospitals and terminally ill patients).

Students gave up classroom parties to work on the projects to give away. The projects were much appreciated by the community. Participant stated, “Although the students are needy and insecure they’ve been able to share so much with others in the community. It has helped them transcend who they are at their age into mature qualities.”

Question 6: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “belonging” as it relates to students in your class. (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address belonging in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate belonging?)



Response: Belonging was being a part of a larger group and doing things together, sticking close, being equal, and protecting each other.

Participant taught belonging using the following strategies:

- a. Team name (e.g., Samurai),
- b. Group vision (e.g., Lobo vision),
- c. Aligned to the Samurai character (e.g., Being honorable, fighting for a purpose, and loyalty),
- d. Travel together,
- e. Stick together,
- f. Protect each other,
- g. Recite the Lobos and Samurai mission daily,
- h. Huddle and celebrate together,
- i. Believe all are equal,
- k. Self-advocacy (e.g., usage of a bigger and stronger voice), and
- l. Having a sense of identity (e.g., who they are and what they bring to any group) and to not take “no” for an answer from anybody.

Question 7: What advice would you give to another teacher who has Native American students in their classroom?

Response: Participant advised other teachers with Native American students the following:

- a. Teach the values (e.g., Circle of Courage, integrity, hard work, ethical and honorable behavior),

- b. Set expectations and teach the skills for (e.g., appropriate behaviors, emotions, and social behavior),
- c. Teach them to be responsible for their own behaviors, because we can't control student's behavior,
- d. Let go of controlling behaviors (e.g., Don't yell, use sarcasm, demand, or be mean),
- e. Lack of talking and responses doesn't mean that Native American students are lacking knowledge or understanding,
- f. Access information through multiple ways,
- g. Lead by your actions through quiet leadership,
- h. Talk slower to students with language processing deficits,
- i. Encourage students to self-advocate, and
- j. Respect your students.

Clarifying question 3: Do any of the students participate in general education for inclusion? Please explain.

Response: The students did not participate in inclusion programs because,

- a. The Common Core standards allows for embedding of much of the instruction,
- b. Follows the IEP which reflect student's strengths and weaknesses,
- c. Students have low reading and writing skills,
- d. A few go to Social Studies and Science and,
- e. Some have attention deficits.

Some of the supports given to the students in the class included;

- a. Leadership roles,
- b. Safe space,
- c. Immediate attention,
- d. One to one help,
- e. Acknowledgement of doing well,
- f. Help wanted signs,
- g. Structure,
- h. Routine,
- i. Emergency plans,
- j. Respected safe boundaries,
- k. Waiting rooms until student was ready to learn,
- l. No refocus or admission malfunction forms,
- m. Learn to keep word,
- n. Skill reinforcement,
- o. Courage signs, and
- p. Gave students a chance to “fix” their mistakes.

**Artifacts from the elementary.** There were 22 photos listed in (Appendix G) that comprised of furniture arrangement, posters that were commercially produced, and student’s work. Six of the 22 artifacts collected were utilized in the summary that included: (1) a poster about; What Courage means, which was to stand up and speak; sit down and listen, (2) posters by students that portrayed the values of: honor, courtesy, honesty, justice, loyalty, and duty, (3) a photo of the “I Can” which was a can that the participant had made with eyes glued all over the can, (4) a poster of What is a Hero? (5)

a photo of the Samurai code and sea stars with student's names, and (6) a poster of a large whale with little fish made by traced hands with student's names.

### **Summary of Findings at the Elementary School**

Prior to agreeing to participate in the study, the participant had very little knowledge about the Circle of Courage values. After she had a chance to research the values she realized she already taught values although she didn't label them as the Circle of Courage of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging as a part of her curriculum.

**Mastery in the elementary school.** The value of mastery in elementary provided academic challenge in the content areas of writing, computations, and reading for the Native American students and others in special education at the elementary school. There was emphasis on score percentage for academic achievement in skills that the students were taught because the goal was for them to be able to function in society by being able to perform basic math, writing, and reading skills.

There was a focus on meeting the standards as evidenced by the child friendly standards displayed in the classroom. The students received rewards from the participant when they achieved scores beginning at 80 percent and higher. The rewards were given by an account item analysis system with star scorers and star tickets. Students had input on the development of scoring rubrics for assessments of the work. There were student exemplars displayed in the classroom and a can with an "I can" message. There were a total of three verbal praises given by the participant. For example, "you are amazing, I like the way you... and look at that it is impressive."

The participant specified that mastery was based on academic performance and not student behavior or effort. Self-efficacy skills were developed through educational field trips which helped build navigation skills, riding the city bus, developing points of reference, and communication skills.

The reading activity was challenging for the students because they had to listen for letter sounds to write the letter being dictated. If the students got off task or didn't hear a sound they became lost and fell behind. She did not repeat the letters or the sound nor wait for anyone to catch up. One Native American student fell behind and kept saying he was marking everything wrong. The teacher kept moving forward and did not stop to assist him. The value of mastery was sought for the students but at least one did not achieve as demonstrated by this student.

**Independence in the elementary school.** The participant defined independence as having self-advocacy skills and a sense of responsibility. One of the ways this value was taught was by having the students express themselves with loud and strong verbal statements that began with, "Stop, I don't like it when you ..." when they encountered uncomfortable situations. Circle time was sometimes used for brief consultations. The elementary participant began the reading lesson about bravery. This particular activity aligned to the Samurai character of fighting for a purpose and to teach the concept of standing behind your decisions no matter what others said to an individual. The character of standing behind a decision was related to responsibility and independence.

Independence, according to Brendtro et al. (1990), occurred when the child can say, "I have power to make decisions" (p. 138). The participant continued to the next activity discussing the temperature outside. Students recorded the temperature and verbalized a

number and ended it with the words degrees and Fahrenheit. She likened the recording of the temperatures to scientists which she told the students they were like because they were tracking the temperature each day.

The students were encouraged to take risks and allow mistakes to be “fixed.” The students had choices when it came to “learning” in class; this was implemented through a variety of ways that included waiting rooms, safe spaces, and help wanted signs. The waiting room was a place where students could wait until they were ready to join the class activity. The safe space was where students could go if they did not want to be harassed by anyone in the class for incidents such as misbehaviors or schoolwork. The students rejoined the class when they were ready to deal with the incident or consequences. Students used help wanted signs when they needed help with schoolwork, other behavior issues, or concerns. To reiterate learned content, the participant had posters displayed throughout the classroom. The posters were student made (e.g., honor, courtesy, honesty, justice, loyalty, duty) or commercially produced (e.g., What is courage? What is a hero?). Another method the participant used to increase skills for independence was by listening to the students and hearing what the students were saying. Independence in special education programs isn’t implemented as often because the students are impacted adversely by “learned helplessness.” The participant stated that students who have been in the program for a longer period of time were impacted more.

**Generosity in the elementary school.** The value of generosity was defined by the projects and crafts the students generated for the community organizations that received their gifts. It was also expressed by the kindness they showed towards others. The participant taught generosity by encouraging teamwork, looking out for each other,

collaborative art projects, and community outreach. The students made cards, Ojos, place mats, bread, door napkins, and a flag to distribute to organizations including veterans, churches, hospitals, homeless shelters, and to terminally ill individuals during the holidays. Although the projects took most of the time away from parties and other holiday related festivities from the students, they persevered with the projects to completion and distribution. The participant stated that helping others improved the student's feelings of insecurity and need and helped them transcend into students with mature qualities and abilities. In addition, the students exhibited kindness through emotions and awareness.

The character of having concern for others and feeling needed with a purpose was evident in the projects created by the students. There was a promotion of well-being to others and classmates as seen by the collaboration to complete and distribute the finished projects. Peer help and sharing was so much a part of the culture of the class that one student was observed offering the use of one available protractor to another student to use first while he patiently waited, although the action caused him to fall behind the rest of the class. The value of generosity was not observed during the reading lesson selected for the snapshot observation. But was it referenced by the student who had his birthday celebrated with a cake the day before. It had such an impact on him that he was still talking about his birthday the following day.

**Belonging in the elementary school.** The sense of belonging was taught through a variety of methods that included group huddles, traveling together, class celebrations, daily recitation of the Samurai code, and the Lobo mission. The class had a sense of identity through their team name the Samurais. They were taught characteristics that

aligned to the Samurai code to honor; to fight for a purpose; and loyalty. The participant led the class in daily recitation of the Samurai code, Lobo Mission, and the Pledge of Allegiance. The students were taught not to take “no” for an answer and to know who they were and what they brought to any group they joined (e.g., qualities, talents, and character).

The student comments were acknowledged with a response from the participant whether the comment was a question, a request, or a statement. This behavior demonstrated she was listening and their statements were important. The concept of being an important member of a group and the idea of sticking together, being an equal to others, and protecting each other built a sense of community for the students. They were comfortable when they asked for help, when they asked for jazz music to be turned on, and when they decided they weren't ready to learn and opted to go to the waiting room and or the safe space. The participant's comment “I have five young men at my table” gave a sense of belonging to the five boys because they looked up and counted to make sure she was referring to them.

**Advice from an elementary teacher to other teachers of Native American students.** Lastly, the participant advised other teachers with Native American students to (1) teach the values Circle of Courage, integrity, hard work, ethical and honorable behavior, (2) set expectations and teach the skills necessary for appropriate behavior including: emotions, mental, and social, with the goal of teaching the students to control their own actions, (3) respect your students and know that limited speech does not mean lack of knowledge and understanding (4) lead by your actions by letting go of controlling behaviors such as yelling, use of sarcasm, demands, and meanness and (5) encourage



your students to learn to self-advocate. Appendix G presents the Circle of Courage values for the elementary level and the linked combination of data from the observations, semi structured interview, and the artifacts to the five consolidated characteristics of the values.

### **Middle School**

There were four classroom observations conducted. Each observation lasted one hour and a semi structured interview followed. The participant was offered a meeting to member check the transcripts of the data collected from her classroom observation, but she chose to keep the information as collected and documented.

The research commenced after an initial meeting with the participant. The consent to participate in a Human Research Study was signed and the observation dates were scheduled. The goal in scheduling the observations was for different days of the week and at different times during the day due to the variety of activities and curriculum taught throughout the week and the various aspects of instruction and non-instruction time. The observations were conducted at 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:00 noon, and one at 12:50 p.m. Two of the four observations were scheduled on Tuesday, one on Wednesday, and one on Thursday.

The middle school was built in 2000 and had an enrollment of 1,345 students. The classroom was located in the middle wing of three separate wings north of the main building. The classroom was the first classroom to the immediate left as one entered the wing.

Upon entry into the classroom, a sweet fruity smell permeated the room. The classroom was organized. Student book bags were hanging on pegs on the north wall, the

kitchenette was clean, and the students were sitting at one of the three tables in the room or walking across the room. The students were friendly and greeted adults entering and leaving the room with a hello or a good bye. Their hospitality immediately made one feel welcomed. On my first day in the classroom, I was met by a student who invited me to a chair at a table next to the door that opened to the outside. The door was ajar to allow air into the room that first day because it was a warm day. The room had five adults including myself and 10 students. The participant was visiting with an adult observer. The other adults in the room included a therapist and an assistant. The students were completing their assignments and visiting with each other or the other adults. The participant greeted me and shouted, "Will be right there, as soon as I am done."

The classroom was medium sized and roomy with supplies and student's things organized in their appropriate space. The classroom had a small kitchenette with a stove, a dishwasher, and half a wall of cupboard space to store cleaning supplies and food items. During my third observation, the participant indicated that the school Social Worker was going to come in that afternoon to cook with the students. He called that morning about an ingredient that he needed and was assured that the kitchen had the particular ingredient already. The classroom was organized with three tables arranged into a large "u" shape in the center of the classroom facing the Promethean board on the west wall. This table had names of students taped to the top and it also served as the hub for all instruction and activity. In addition, there were two round tables: one towards the back of the room (east side) and the second one in the southwest corner of the room. Behind the southwest table were two large folding closet doors that opened to a washer and dryer. There were three computers set up along the wall in the far-east side of the room. There were bookcases in

the back of the room between the participant's desk and the computers and more bookcases behind the round table in the southwest corner and another by the front entry. Every space was utilized and without any clutter in the classroom during my observation visits as well as Halloween when the students made life size skeletons and masks.

**A typical day in a middle school.** At 8:00 a.m. the (participant, assistant, and myself) met the buses in the loop, which was located on the southwest side of the main building. Some students had already arrived and immediately came over to greet us. The students were introduced and after a head count we walked to the cafeteria located on the north end of the main building. We walked to a section in the cafeteria that was designated for the class. Some of the students immediately located small buckets with rags and wiped the tables that would be used during breakfast. Next, they went and grabbed a breakfast tray and sat down and ate their meals. They sat facing each other along both sides of the long cafeteria table and visited with the person sitting in front of them while others ate or just sat and waited. Afterwards the students wiped the surface of all the tables in the cafeteria with the wet rags. Prior to going outside, the participant stopped the students who did not have their jackets on and helped each one put on their jackets and told them that she did not want anyone catching a cold and wanted everyone to stay warm. When we arrived at the classroom the students hung up their jackets and backpacks and some went to the bathroom. After everyone was back in the room, they all stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance with the participant leading the pledge.

The students participated in circle time. A student leader led the class through oral recitals of the days of the week, months of the year, and counting by 10's, 20's, and 30's. She concluded with telling time to the hour, half hour, and recital of today's date. The

participant wrote the month, today's date, and a short paragraph on the white board. The students read aloud the short paragraph written on the board with discussion about the words from the paragraph. The students then wrote the information from the board onto their notebooks and read it aloud to their elbow partner when both had completed copying from the board. At the conclusion of the circle time, the students took a bathroom break and got a morning snack before they started the next lesson.

**Dialogues.** Of the four observations conducted at this school one is presented in this section to provide a snapshot of a science lesson in middle school and the participant's methods and interaction with the students. There were three activities: an outside activity, reading and interpreting graphs by Scholastic, and dioramas. The afternoon began with an announcement that trees would be planted outside. I accompanied the class outside to see machinery being used by men to plant trees by the classroom. The students were excited and they talked about the possibility of decorating the trees for the holidays. The teacher talked about the beautiful view that the trees provided rather than seeing a pile of sand.

**Observation of a middle school science lesson.** This section depicts a snapshot of a science lesson in a middle school on November 18, 2014 from 12:50 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. There were nine students (3 boys and 6 girls), one teacher, two assistants, and one observer.

The class went outside of the classroom and watched the school maintenance men plant three trees. The planting was done with machinery. The participant arranged with the maintenance men earlier to notify us when they were ready to begin digging the hole for the trees they were going to plant. The sounds of the machinery entranced the students. There was discussion by the participant about decorating the three trees for the holidays. The students were happy that the trees were right outside their classroom door. There was discussion about how the trees gave a beautiful view and scenery for all because before it had just been a pile of sand. Back in the classroom, the lesson was on learning how to

read graphs and charts from Scholastic. The second half of the class period was on dioramas.

A new student came in and needed a Scholastic worksheet for the day's lesson. The participant stopped what she was doing and went to help the student locate a worksheet.

Another new student said he fell down because someone pushed him. The participant made sure he was okay. She walked over to the student and asked if he had any scrapes or cuts and asked him if he was hurting anywhere. The student indicated that he only fell but was not hurting now.

Participant explained the assignment for the Science shoebox dioramas as follows: "Okay kiddos, you guys, all picked your animals." She reviewed the student lists and the animals they had selected for their assignment. The animals selected were boar, fox, deer, snake, mountain lion, butterflies, bob cat, rabbit, coyote, hummingbird, and elk. In the meantime, two girls entered the classroom.

Participant: Welcomes the student helpers. "Come in and sit with us. Grab a chair." "Introduced the lesson objective to the girls who came in." and said, "These girls come in from the ESL class and that they are here to help the class."

Participant then continued the directions for the projects. She informed the students what they needed for their animal project to earn an "A" as a grade.

Participant explained the assignment details for the Animal Diorama Projects that included:

1. The name of the animal
2. Three pictures of the animal
3. A predator of the animal
4. A picture of the state of New Mexico
5. Five facts about your animal
6. One sentence about why you picked animal.

Participant and students had a discussion about humans as predators. The participant showed her poster about her animal the "Elk" and the facts she had by reviewing the example, which the students discussed. The poster included:

1. The elk is a warm blooded animal
2. The elk is an herbivore
3. The elk lives 10-12 years
4. The elk can grow 4-5 feet tall

5. The male elk has antlers and the female does not have antlers.
6. The full-grown elk lose their antlers in March and they have furry antlers. They itch and scratch to get the fur off their antlers.
7. Reason for choice of the animal. "I want a good sentence."

Student asked the participant if she had a mom. Participant answered him "yes, she is no longer with me here but she is still with me in my heart."

Participant asked the peer helpers, "Have you made anything in a shoe box?" they both responded "yes."

Participant showed examples of other "shoe box dioramas" on a slideshow on the whiteboard. There was discussion about the slides the students viewed. They discussed their ideas for their dioramas (e.g., ocean with fish and water; a duck habitat in a forest and a car garage).

Participant stated, "Do yours in a shoe box and your parents are going to help you put it together and some will get help from aunties, uncles, grandmothers and others."

Participant stated that she would provide the items to put into the diorama and had shoeboxes to give them. She explained that this assignment was going to be a home project. She told them she would give them the information that included the picture and the facts from the computer lab. The students had 3-4 weeks to complete this assignment.

Participant told the students that the dioramas would be put on the wall so they needed to use a shoebox. She was hopeful that no one would take their stuff this time, because they have lost a penguin before when someone took it off the wall in the hall outside their classroom.

There was much discussion by the students about their animals and what would work and how it would look. The participant gave additional ideas of how to depict water, hang birds and butterflies in the dioramas.

A student volunteered her plastic deer to loan to another student. Participant said, "I like the collaboration" and said we have a "deer on loan."

Participant instructed, "You can use plastic animals for your projects the Dollar Store has plastic animals and Paper Mache' of animals." "Do not make your shoeboxes heavy or fill it with sand, because if it's too heavy we won't be able to hang it on the wall."

The students saw examples of dioramas for ideas. They discussed what would work and not work. They discussed how the flying insects and birds could be hung in the

shoeboxes with a string. They talked about how trees could be made out of toilet paper rolls and they agreed that rocks would be too heavy to use.

Participant asked the student helpers what their dioramas were on. One student helper had completed a diorama on planets and the other on the water cycle.

Participant asked the students if they got the gist of what they would be doing. The students all responded, "Yes."

The participant's instructions to the students: "Write down what we need on a piece of paper." First, get a pencil. "The first thing we are going to do is write the animal name." Two, bring three pictures of the animal. Girls (student helpers) please help the others write down their information. I am also going to send this home to your parents, so if you don't get it, don't worry."

The students were busy writing the information on their paper. One of the new students had his jacket and his backpack bag washed in the laundry while the class discussed the assignment.

**Semi structured interview at the middle school.** There were seven questions specific to the research and no clarification questions for the participant. To begin the interview, the participant was asked to provide brief information about her teaching experience. The interview responses were analyzed and condensed by an analytic memo as recommended by Saldaña (2009) and then outlined (Boyatzis (1998).

Question 1: Tell me more about your experiences with Native American students.

Response: Participant has taught Native American students with Down Syndrome in prior years but currently she has one Native American student with an intellectual disability. There are several items to consider when you have Native American students:

1. There are cultural differences evident versus other students.
2. There was no segregation of students because all are special but we have to consider values of other students (e.g., religion), and each tribe's issue is different.

3. Cultural issues affecting field trips (e.g., the rattle snake museum and the zoo) and holidays (e.g., some families do not celebrate certain holidays),

4. Parents developing collaborative relationship with parents, and obtaining parent approval for books and videos.

Question 2: What do you know about the Circle of Courage?

Response: Participant did not know anything about the Circle of Courage values.

She looked up the information right away to find out more about it. She said the Circle of Courage values were beautiful. She stated her instructional focus was on building values.

The values implemented included:

- a. Independence,
- b. Be good to each other,
- c. Be self-sufficient,
- d. Be the best person you can be,
- e. Be able to push yourself to achieve your goals,
- f. Society's expectation is the same for everyone no matter the disability,
- g. Parents are supported and helped with their children's behavior.

Question 3: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term "mastery" as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up - Can you give me an example of how you address mastery in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate mastery)?

Response: Mastery is being able to demonstrate understanding and knowledge under pressure. Participant teaches mastery by utilizing three key methods: repetition, modeling, and to know why you are teaching a concept (e.g., personal information; name,



address, phone number, and parent's name). She will also shorten IEP goals to a few focused goals. The participant discussed the differences between total mastery vs. mastery segments. Total mastery was her goal for her students:

1. Total mastery-Feelings of confidence and achieving fewer targeted IEP goals.
2. Mastery segment-Reading (e.g., the number of words students know) and functional skills (e.g., being able to read environment signs).

Question 4: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term "independence" as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up - Can you give me an example of how you address independence in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate independence)?

Response: Independence is being able to do something on your own, something that you couldn't do before such as toileting. The participant teaches independence through the following methods:

- a. Trust (e.g., usage of a soft voice, an approachable behavior, not overbearing and no yelling),
- b. Privacy (e.g., use of hand signals of thumbs up for no accidents and thumbs down for accidents),
- c. Success by taking a step by step approach (e.g., take small steps at a time),
- d. Show you care! Show you care! (e.g., know what they like and listen to them) at home and at school,
- e. Be real (e.g., with issues and faults),
- f. Praise and encouragement,

g. Humor (e.g., teasing) “if you can’t have fun with the kids then you shouldn’t be in a classroom,”

h. Repetition,

i. Structure, and

j. Monitoring and assessing progress (e.g., know what happens).

Participant discussed dependence characteristics she has observed that included:

a. Wetting (e.g., toileting issues),

b. Holding on to people they know and not willing to let go,

c. Not talking,

d. Intimidation, and

e. Ploys to keep caretaker close.

Question 5: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “generosity” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address generosity in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate generosity)?

Response: Generosity means giving (e.g., being nice to others, getting along with others, shopping for things and giving to others, giving money, and food baskets).

Participant teaches generosity through the following methods:

a. Shopped for other people,

b. Donated money at Thanksgiving and during holidays to purchase food baskets,

c. Instructed the students to say: thank you and please,

d. Campfire was used to talk about feelings,

- e. Talked to and developed with students specific behavior strategies which had a beginning and an ending point,
- f. Involved other specialists (e.g., school counselor),
- g. Rewards were given for achieving goal,
- h. Praised the students (e.g., It was really nice that you did that, I'm glad you held the door, or thank you for getting their work), and
- i. Watched from a distance to monitor progress.

Participant pointed out that the children with disabilities in her class were not generous and they feel they are owed and were often mean to each other. She concluded the reasons might be because they were never taught this value and other adults may have hovered over them and have created dependent behaviors. In addition, she characterized the higher functioning students as being more generous than the lower functioning students. She emphasized that generosity needed to be taught to children with disabilities. She stressed that hovering and doing for the children with disabilities will cause dependent behaviors so she advocated for empowerment of the students by having them learn the value of generosity.

Question 6: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “belonging” as it relates to students in your class. (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address belonging in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate belonging)?

Response: Belonging was being accepted, having trust, and establishing feelings of belonging in the classroom, home, and society. Participant teaches belonging through the following methods,

- a. Integration into other locations such as the cafeteria for lunch, other classrooms, and use of reverse inclusion,
- b. Invitations to visit were extended to administrators, teachers, and other students,
- c. Know each student personally,
- d. Home visits to get to know the parents personally,
- e. Attendance was important in building belonging,
- f. Limited inclusion due to limited choices (e.g., SPIRE reading, Physical education (PE), computer class, art, and band),
- g. Purposeful field trips such as community outings.

Participant has gone out of her way to get students to come to school to establish a sense of belonging. She gave away her living room furniture and a big screen TV to a family in exchange to improve attendance for their child.

Question 7: What advice would you give to another teacher who has Native American students in their classroom?

Response: Participant advised other teachers with Native American students to:

- a. Know your parents and students,
- b. Talk about cultural issues with parents and students,
- c. Get to know the culture of the Native American families (e.g., the do's and don'ts will be shared with you),
- d. Know where your parents and students live (e.g., sometimes they have a long bus ride),
- e. Know each student individually,

- f. Teachers fill many roles (e.g., mother, counselor, nurse, dad) and
- g. Love what you do.

Although she becomes irritated when her colleagues tell her she has it easy because she has only nine students in her class. The participant loves her job and said she will never give it up.

**Artifacts from the middle school.** There were 14 artifacts listed in (Appendix H) that included lesson plans and photos that were comprised of two categories: furniture arrangement, posters of student work, and posters that were commercially produced. Five of the 14 artifacts collected included (the morning circle time, class schedule of daily activities, and calendar lesson plans, hallway displays, art work and stories) were utilized in the summary.

### **Summary of Findings at the Middle School**

Initially the participant was not aware of the Circle of Courage values. However, proud that her focus of instruction has been on building independence - being good to one another, being self-sufficient, and being the best person you can be. She said, “A person has to be able to push himself to get anywhere, because you aren’t going to get it by not trying.” The participant challenged the students with the statement: “Society expects them to be able to function whether if they have an intellectual, physical, and or cognitive disability.” The participant also included parents in her circle of support by helping them build appropriate behavior at home with their children.

**Mastery in the middle school.** The participant defined mastery as “one knowing the information so well that it could be reproduced under extreme stress or pressure.” She told a story about her student who was faced with such a challenge when he got lost

during the Annual Balloon Fiesta. He was asked for his parent's name, address, and phone number. He did not know this information. Since then she has added personal information knowledge to the curriculum. She now requires the students in her class to know their personal information. She labeled this type of mastery as total mastery. Another story was about a Native American student with intellectual disability who mastered toileting skills. The second form of mastery was in academics, which she referred to as mastery segment. This type of mastery included achievement of the IEP goal in reading (e.g., the number of words the students knows and reading environmental signs).

The mastery of concepts was taught through repetition, modeled examples, and identification of targeted IEP goals. There were displays of student work on the walls and in the hallway outside the classroom. During the science lesson observation the participant explained dioramas to the class and provided multiple examples on the Promethean board. She explained to the students how they could get an "A" on their diorama projects and showed the students how to hang birds with a string in a shoebox and showed animal habitats by using a toilet paper roll for trees. The students were excited to begin the projects; they were talking about their animals and what they needed for their dioramas. The participant informed the students they would do their projects at home with help from parents and family members. The participant provided the shoeboxes and information about the animals. The students would research their animals as a class. The lesson would provide mastery because each student would complete his or her project. There was evidence of confidence displayed by the students. The instruction provided the value of mastery and independence as advocated by Brendtro et al. (1990)

where “The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, ‘I can succeed’” (p. 137). “Free will is cultivated by responsibility so that the child can say, ‘I have power to make decisions’” (p. 138). The students were empowered with designing and creating their own dioramas for their selected animal, bird, or reptile.

The observations revealed instruction in reading, math, science, writing, and social studies. The students were challenged with questions (e.g., what do you see here? what do these look like to you? how did you do this? what is that word?)

The participant demonstrated support of the students through verbal praise and hugs. She made it her priority to get to know the students personally (their likes and dislikes) and their parents. She provided rewards and praise to the students for their successes through purchases of happy meals from McDonalds that were delivered to the classroom by the bus drivers and also invited students to join her for lunch.

The advice she gave to teachers was “to know” the importance of knowing why certain concepts were taught rather than just going through the motions. She also advised other teachers to know the characteristics of Native Americans. She extended her support to the Native American students in the classrooms because she knew them as special, peaceful, loving, and happy people.

**Independence in the middle school.** Independence was defined as being able to do something independently such as toileting. The students were empowered by being appointed as “leader for the day” on rotating basis. The leader was allowed to make decisions for the sequence and method of review during the morning circle. The participant exhibited full participation in community activities through: (1) conducting

home visits during district designated parent-teacher conference days, (2) giving students responsibility for retelling of their field trip experiences, (3) having students order food from a menu independently, and (4) shopping without a family member along on a trip. Another element of independence is being able to exhibit the ability to make decisions through making choices.

Choices were offered during daily lessons (1) flex sequencing of lessons (e.g., video first than worksheets); (2) allowed students to continue working beyond the designated stop point; (3) and or to stop; and (4) the morning circle activity. The participant showed her advocacy when she stressed strongly, “Show you care! At home and at school, care about what they like, care about who they are, and to give lots of encouragement and praise daily.” The participant has been successful in building trust with her students through various strategies that included (1) provision of privacy (e.g., hand and head signals; thumbs up or down, nodding yes or no, and or talking in private outside the classroom), (2) being approachable and not over bearing, (3) using a soft voice and no yelling, (4) being real with issues and faults, and (5) humor (e.g., teasing) she stated, “If you can’t have fun with the students, you shouldn’t be in the classroom.”

**Generosity in the middle school.** Generosity was defined as giving (e.g., being nice, getting along with others, and giving money for food baskets). Students were taught to share their feelings around the campfire and shop for others. Peer helpers were observed within and outside the classroom. Fifth grade general education students came into the classroom to help the students. The students from the classroom were also encouraged to help each other.



The participant demonstrated generosity by (1) tending to student's hurts and illnesses, (2) laundering for students, (3) giving rewards and prizes from out-of-pocket, (4) giving praise for effort and achievements, (5) taking phone calls from service providers and parents no matter how busy she was, (6) supporting parents with her skills and (7) being a friend and a partner to them. She invited parents to the classroom to discuss cultural issues and concerns. She also shared information about curriculum activities. When the participant was working with students on specific goals, she discussed and involved them to set goals with them. The goals had a beginning and an ending point to help students gauge their progress. The students were taught to say thank you and please. She stated that the students needed to be taught how to be generous because initially they are not. She pointed out that learning might be hindered by adults hovering and doing for the students. This may have given the students the idea that they were owed the attention and support. She has also observed that students with mild disabilities seemed to be more giving and generous than the others. The value of generosity was evidenced when one of the students informed the Native American student with intellectual disability that she had a deer he could use. The animal he had selected for his diorama was 'a deer.' The participant acknowledged the demonstration of generosity with the comment "I like the collaboration; we have a deer on loan." Brendtro et al. (1990) described this type of value when "character is cultivated by concern for others so that the child can say, 'I have a purpose for my life'" (p. 138).

**Belonging in the middle school.** The participant defined belonging as being accepted and being in an environment where there were feelings of trust. It was a place where one was welcomed including classroom, home, and society. The demonstration of

belonging was observed in the greetings and introductions throughout the observation period. Students also showed demonstrations of belonging with visitors and each other. Belonging was enhanced by (1) reversed inclusion (e.g., teachers, students, and administrators were invited into the classroom to read to the students), (2) building teachers were asked to extend an invitation to the participant's class which allowed the students to attend presentations in other classrooms, (3) using the school cafeteria during breakfast and lunch, and (4) planning purposeful field trips throughout the year.

The participant exhibited belonging by (1) knowing each student personally, (2) knowing each parent personally, (3) working with parents and students to improve attendance, and (4) honoring bilingualism of students. Individual skills of students were recognized with statements; (1) "Where is John (fictional name used to protect identity of student), he just learned to whistle today," (2) "You guys are smarter than the average bear, nice, nice," (3) "It is curtains for you and curtains for you next time," and (4) "How come you guys are so awesome?" These are reflective of so many positive praise and encouragements observed.

On the day of the science lesson observation two new students had just arrived and joined the class. The teacher introduced the two students to me since I was new to them. As the class went inside and began their lesson on charts and graphs, one of the new students indicated he could not find his worksheet. The participant stopped and went to help look for a worksheet for the student. As she looked for a worksheet, the second new student informed the participant that he had been pushed down outside during lunch. The teacher immediately became concerned and asked the student if he was okay and checked him for scrapes. After she was assured that there were no scrapes anywhere, she

gave the worksheet to the first student and showed him how to complete the worksheet. In the meantime, the rest of the class was working in pairs on their worksheets with general education students sitting with the students who requested assistance. After the worksheets, the class began discussion about dioramas.

The general education students and the new students were introduced to everyone. The value of belonging attributes discussed by Brendtro et al. (1990) as “the universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust so the child can say, “I am loved” (p. 137) was observed.

**Advice from a middle school teacher to other teachers of Native American students.** Lastly, the participant advised other teachers with Native American students on the following: (1) Know your students and parents, (2) Talk about cultural issues with your parents and students, (3) Get to know the culture of the Native American families to get familiar with the do’s and don’ts of the culture (e.g., it is out of respect that Native Americans do not look at someone in the eye, in fact it is considered rude if you do), (4) Know where your students live because some might have a long bus ride each day, (5) Know each student individually, (6) Teachers fill many roles including nurse, dad, mom, counselor, and (7) Love what you do.

Additional perspectives related to middle school special education practice included (1) the need to develop targeted IEP goals for elementary students transitioning to middle school because the students usually came with too many IEP goals, (2) the participant stated the classification of classes and programs created barriers for smooth transitioning of students and teachers, and (3) the perception by general education teachers’ that maximum level teachers of special education had it easy because they have

only a few students. But the fact is that maximum level special education teachers have more responsibilities. The added responsibilities included instruction delivery, medical conditions, coordination of related services, program coordination, parents, and support for student development in academics, functional skills, and life skills.

Appendix K shows the Circle of Courage values for the middle school level and the linked combination of data from the observations, semi structured interviews, and the artifacts.

### **High School**

There were four classroom observations conducted. Each observation lasted one hour each and one semi structured interview with the special education teacher.

The research commenced at the school after an initial meeting with the participant. Permission to take part in a Human Research Study was signed and observation dates were scheduled. Although I was interested in observing the class during different activity times and days during the week, it was not possible. The students had scheduled off campus days and went to various teachers for different courses each day. The only time available was on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:08 a.m. when all the students were with the participant. Two observations were conducted on Tuesday and two on Thursday.

The high school was built in 1949 and had an enrollment of 1,632 students. The classroom was located on the second floor of the main building, at the west end of the hallway. After a short walk up the ramp and into a short hallway the classroom was located to the immediate right after turning the first corner. The classroom was a well-lit spacious room. The students were actively involved with discussions with the participant

and visited with each other at one another's desks as they waited to begin the class. The classroom was large with an adjacent smaller room that housed the clothing bank for students who needed extra clothes or a coat. The adjacent room was also used as a laundry room and lunchroom. Although the room served as a multi-purpose room it was organized and clean with everything folded, hung and put away. The students returned to this room with their trays during lunch where they sat and ate lunch with their friends. The room was set up with several smaller round tables with chairs. There were racks with clothing hanging on them. The room was separated from the larger classroom with bookcases and storage cabinets.

The classroom was organized with a kidney shaped table at the front of the classroom facing east. This was utilized by one student who sat at this table. There were two tables (one round and one rectangle) on each side of the kidney shaped table. The round table was located close to the bookcases that was used as a divider to the adjacent room and was utilized by students. In addition, two students utilized the rectangle table on the opposite side. There were four desks arranged facing the white board (at the front of the room). One desk (west side) of the round table had a student, and in the center of the classroom were two desks that were used by two students. Behind the two desks in the center of the room was another rectangular table towards the back of the classroom with another student. The participant's desk was located in the northwest corner of the classroom facing the room. There were equipment next to the participant's desk that included a printer and a copier. There was another desk between the participant's desk and the rectangular table that was used by a student. The classroom and the position of the desks and tables allowed for each student to have personal space and allowed for the

participant and assistant to walk from student to student to assist and visit with each. I observed the participant and assistant getting down to the student's eye level at the desks to talk and help the students. The classroom had an atmosphere of rapport, respect, and comfortable communication. The student's behaviors and language portrayed comfort during the times when they visited with one another. The students respectfully sat down in their chairs and prepared for instruction as soon as the participant indicated he was ready to begin class. Class began when he walked to the whiteboard at the front of the classroom.

He loves his job and has told people that he wasn't ready to retire. He was having too much fun teaching the students each day. He referred to himself as a nurturing person and tells his friends that he wasn't going to work but instead he was going to school to learn from the students. He has learned that to be a successful teacher, you have to be structured, consistent, and fair.

**A typical day in a high school.** Upon my arrival in the classroom at 11:00 a.m. during the four observation periods, I would find the students talking with one another while standing or sitting down at a desk. The participant visited with students and one time he informed a student that he was doing so well all morning that he texted the student's uncle and told him what a great morning his nephew was having. Later that same hour the uncle responded to the texted message and indicated he was very happy to receive the good report about his nephew. The participant read the message to the student, which made the student happy and proud. The participant sends messages home about each student every week and has kept a binder with copies of the notes. In addition,

he wrote a letter to the students and the parents at the beginning of the school year. The letter welcomed the students and their families and outlined the plans for the year.

The participant began the lessons by stating the goals and objectives for the period. The lessons observed included counting coins as a math activity and another time on literacy. The lesson on reading and writing was entitled “What I Like About Myself.” This lesson was continued on another day which required the students to write their first and last names vertically down the left edge of a sheet of paper. They were asked to write statements about what they liked and what they were good at. The students would become very involved with their assignments and usually didn’t like to stop. The participant and assistant provided assistance to the students who raised their hands for help. The lessons induced much discussion among the students. They continued working until a few of the students asked about lunchtime. The participant kept a time clock with an alarm that would go off when it was time for lunch. The lunch assistant came in during that time and waited until the students were dismissed by the participant, and then took the students to the cafeteria. Each day, prior to getting in line for lunch the participant administered an Out the door question about the day’s lesson as a form of assessment about each student’s understandings of the work. Each day the students chose to bring their trays back to the classroom where they sat together in the adjacent room and ate their lunch while visiting.

**Dialogues.** One of the four observations conducted at the school is shared in this section. The observation of a math lesson is shared in this section to provide a snapshot of the participant’s interaction with the students during an academic lesson. During this particular observation, the class began with nine students at five tables and ended with 11

students, one participant, one assistant, and one observer. There were two students seated at each of the four tables and one table had one student.

**Observation of a high school math lesson.** This section depicts a snapshot of a math lesson on October 15, 2013 from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

There were nine students in the classroom working on counting "money" when I walked into the classroom on this day (first observation). It was a group instruction in math.

Participant: Called on a student. How much is a dime worth? Show me a coin that equals 10 cents. "Which coins put together equals 10 cents? 2 nickels equals 10 cents. I need another combination that equals 10 cents, show me another combination." He was using realia in math instruction with coins.

Participant put up six fingers and counted out six and said six cents. How many more to make 10 cents? In the meantime, another student requested help so he sent a peer helper over to the student.

Participant: Go over and check, to see what she's got.

Participant: "Good job" "Good job" How much is a penny worth?

Participant: Patted a student on the back. Individual attention was given to a student, how many pennies was that? Good job, Good job Buddy, Count to five. How many pennies will make 10 cents?

Students: Mister, "Put the clock to lunchtime."

Participant: It was 27 minutes after. "Great job working together." We will stop at 11:46 a.m. It is now 11:28 a.m. Count in how many more minutes we will stop? Then we will go.

Students: The clock isn't right.

Students: Teacher, you are old (teasing).

Participant: I am old, so old. (Emphasis)

Participant: What coin? What one coin is equal to 10 cents? A dime.

Student: Two nickels.



Participant: Two nickels is right.

Participant calls on a student: What coins equal 10 cents?

Student: One nickel and five pennies.

Participant: "Good job"

Participant calls on another student: Tell me if five pennies and five pennies equal 10 cents.

Student: 10 pennies equals 10 cents.

Participant: Good job, Good job. Show me which coin equals 10 cents, your cheat sheet is right there.

Participant: (Teasing) Acting like he was taking the coins from the student and says, "I'm sorry I thought it was mine."

Participant: "Good job" (Participant rubs the head of the student and asked one dime equals, what?)

Participant: What is equal to 25 cents? How many coins, Mijo?

Student: Three coins.

Participant: Show me three coins that equal 25 cents, Mijo.

Participant was working with two students to count coins to make 25 cents. Showed them and said "look here." Good job.

Participant: Students do not go to his (another student's) table please.

Participant says to a student (teasing): Did we not have a bet that Dallas was going to win?

Student: "Dallas lost, the Redskins beat them."

Participant: Give me five coins that equal 25 cents. Five nickels equals 25 cents. What five coins equal 25cents?

Student: Peer helper was assisting another student in counting out 5 coins.

Participant: Give me 4 more coins to equal 25 cents. And he called on another student go over and help two students (1 girl and 1 boy).

Participant: Helped a student. 25 what? Five nickels equals 25 cents. Count by fives, buddy. Count for me. Count by five. "You got it!" 25 cents plus 25 cents equals 50 cents.

Participant: Good job. Now figure out 25 cents, but you cannot use five nickels or a quarter. Figure out another way to come up with 25 cents. Okay count to me.

Participant whispered in another student's ear and said "help him out."

Participant: At the table with two students (boy and girl) and showing the students the correct coins to make 25 cents.

Participant: "Show me, Good job!" 10 cents plus five cents equals 15 cents plus one nickel plus one nickel equals 25 cents. Good job! Good job! (He clapped for the students to show appreciation).

Participant: Students put the coins on your bags. Put your money in your bags. Good job!  
Participant: Thank you. Go Bud. Put your money in your bag. Thank you for helping each other.

Participant: One quarter equals 25 cents, 10 cents equals what? Dime equals 10 cents.

Participant: Thank you very much for helping. Half dollar equals 50 cents.

Participant: (Teasing) Didn't I tell you the Cowboys were going to win? They can beat the Redskins and the Steelers.

Participant: Line up at the door. Line up.

Participant: (Teasing about the Redskins) you are going to lose. Let's go. Do not run.

**Semi structured interview at the high school.** Seven questions specific to the research and three clarifying questions were asked. To begin the interview the participant was asked to share information about his teaching experience as an introduction. The

interview responses were analyzed and condensed by an analytic memo as recommended by Saldaña (2009) and then outlined (Boyatzis, 1998).

Question 1: Tell me about your experiences with Native American students.

Response: The participant noticed that Native American students were interested in participating in their cultural events. He advocated within the school with other teachers to allow excused absences for students when they were absent for cultural events. He realized the importance it had for the students. He talked to the students about their cultural events. Although he didn't give enough time for the students to share about their cultures he had them write reports to present to the class. He developed a rapport with the Native American students he's had over the years. He often visits with them when he sees them in the community.

Question 2: What do you know about the Circle of Courage?

Response: The participant has never heard of the Circle of Courage values but has taught values as part of his curriculum that include social skills, moral values, and life skills. He has taught responsibility as a value and has pointed out the values portrayed in stories read in class. Additionally, he has taught moral values because the world expects people to act appropriately whether they have a disability or not. The expectations are the same for everybody and has stressed that values are for all people.

Question 3: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term "mastery" as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up - Can you give me an example of how you address mastery in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate mastery?)

Response: Mastery was defined as the best a student was able to do at a given time. The learned skill was built upon until evidenced by improvement and progress. The participant pointed out that mastery was not IEP goals and trying to cover all of them annually. It was not letter grades because it was not a fair form of evaluation for children with disabilities. He advocated that the students do not have the skills to be assessed at the same level as typical students using letter grades because letter grades do not have the same meaning. The participant's preferred method to help students with their work was as a group. The method allowed the students to feel success and to learn from their peers. Eventually, mastery was attained with feelings of improvement and manifested by passing grades and completed IEP goals.

Question 4: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term "independence" as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address independence in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate independence?)

Response: Independence was being able to do something on one's own at a given moment. The participant taught skills for independence through practice of the learned concepts (e.g. writing own hall passes) while he observed from a distance. Sometimes it has taken awhile to learn a concept (e.g., telling time). The passes were written for two purposes: to improve writing skills and for telling time. The participant was an advocate for providing guidance from a distance. Independence was conceptualized through using learned concepts; following directions; and sharing expectations. In addition, independence was also manifested through evidence of producing results such as writing own hall pass, telling time, cleaning, and laundering.

Question 5: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “generosity” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address generosity in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate generosity?)

Response: Generosity was defined as giving from the heart. The students showed much empathy for one another, other students, and for teachers. Participant teaches generosity by talking about feelings - how it feels when you don't feel good. The students did not consider their disabilities because they view others (students and teachers) as having greater needs than themselves. The students participated in planning integration methods into their class for students with autism. Generosity was a conceptual value when empathy was central in the discussions with students. Generosity was manifested through taking in of other students into the classroom.

Question 6: What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “belonging” as it relates to students in your class? (Possible follow up - Can you give me an example of how you address belonging in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate belonging?)

Response: Belonging is when one is accepted into a community. The community could be a school or a family. The students greeted students who have been absent and told them that they were glad to see them at school. This showed that attendance was important for belonging. The participant taught belonging by telling the students to be a part of somebody or something instead of being alone.

Question 7: What advice would you give to another teacher who has Native American students in their classroom?

Response: “Give respect” when working with Native American students.

- a. Teachers should be respectful of the students when they are absent for their cultural events. They shouldn't be angry about the absences.
- b. Teachers need to respect the Native American students instead of putting them down.
- c. Teachers need to give respect to get respect.
- d. Teachers need to listen to the students instead of just pretending to listen, and
- e. Teachers should know about the cultures represented in their classes by doing research about the cultures.

Clarifying question 1: Please discuss further some of the topics you covered in class (e.g., What Is Special about Me, What I Like about Me, and What is Good about Me?) Explain them.

Response: Participant maintained that all people are special and unique. He said, “Everyone struggles with identifying good things about themselves.” He pointed out that bad qualities were easier for people to point out. He has witnessed his students feeling bad and will display it by putting their heads down. The participant has supported the students in strengthening their weaknesses by pointing out their positive qualities. He has done a lot of work helping students with low self-esteem. He has told them repeated times, “We’ve made bad choices but it doesn’t make us a bad person.” He stated that if students had stronger self-images they would tend to do better in school. Sometimes students are told repeatedly they are bad from those who should be helping them like parents, teachers, and behavior interventionists. Students need to hear positive words

rather than negative words. He told a story about helping a student with a diagnosed behavior disorder by turning his behavior around with positive remarks. Eventually, the student calmed down and sat down next to the student who initially got him mad.

Clarifying question 2: You have students who are involved in volunteer work at the hospital and in inclusion classes at the high school, please explain.

Response: A. Hospital

- a. A student with Prader Willi Syndrome realized that she could not work in the gift shop because of the availability of food items and told the participant.
- b. A student worker learned to sort mail in the mailroom by using a machine and find his way to the work location without assistance.
- c. Three students learned to clean the hospital cafeteria by following a routine. They located their work site in the facility; found their work supplies (e.g., buckets, soap, and rags); and cleaned and refilled (e.g., Chili salsa jars, salt and pepper shakers) and cleaned the tables. In addition, they interacted appropriately with people.
- d. Students learned to budget and planned how they would utilize their \$5.00 tickets they sometimes received from the hospital.
- e. Students learned to ride the city bus; walked across the high school campus; walked to the bus stop two blocks away; purchased a bus pass; got off the bus close to the hospital; walked across the university campus; walked to the hospital; found their work locations; and reversed their path to return home. They learned to insert the bus passes into the slot correctly and pulled the rope to stop the bus to get off.

Response: B. Inclusion

- a. A student was selected as an assistant to the teacher in Spanish class as peer and helper to students learning the language,
- b. A student participating in general education swimming was successful as reported by the coach,
- c. A student in teen sports class successfully represented the school on the soccer team, as reported by the coach and requested to have him back on the team again this year,
- d. All of the students from the class participated in the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) class.
- e. Two students were in regular English class and one student was in a general education history class.

**Artifacts from the high school.** There were 18 photos of furniture arrangement, letters sent home to parents, and posters of student work and those commercially produced as shown in Appendix I. Five artifacts were utilized in the summary: (1) “I am a good person,” (2) “Go Hornets, building life-long learners and contributors to society, (3) student work “I like art, sports, food, relaxing,...and I am good at...” (4) Welcome letter to parents and (5) weekly letters home to parents.

### **Summary of Findings at the High School**

Although the participant indicated no familiarity with the Circle of Courage values he included social skills, moral values, and life skills as a part of his curriculum. He taught the value of responsibility and other values in stories read in class. In addition, he taught the values because “The world expects people to act appropriately whether they have disabilities or not and that the expectations are the same for everyone.”



During the observations, the students enjoyed the interaction with the participant, evidenced by the teasing between both parties. There were playful exchanges about which National Football League (NFL) team was going to beat whom and teasing about who would win at wrestling. On one occasion the participant acted like he was going to take money from one of the student's table. The students were involved in their learning, evidenced through their responses and their on-task behavior. The participant was actively teaching, the money concept through his frequent verbal reinforcements. He gave the students pats on the back and applauded as a sign of approval. The interaction between students and participant was constant and continuous throughout the observations. The students' appropriate responses to the participant's questions indicated an understanding of the concepts that were presented. The students' demonstrated the understanding of "time" concepts by correctly stating the minutes left until lunch dismissal.

The participant asked the students to help one another. This indicated that he was comfortable with their grasp of the concepts being presented and were able to provide the assistance being requested. The students returned to their classroom to eat lunch with their classmates. There was an adult in the classroom during lunchtimes.

The high school participant was observed during a math lesson on counting money. Each student had a pile of coins that they got from a large jar. Each student was encouraged to reach into the jar and to grab a fistful of coins. The participant demonstrated trust and confidence. The students kept their coins in a bag in their cubbies. They were responsible for cleaning off their desks by putting their coins away before leaving for lunch. The lesson was a worksheet that required the students to count out the

correct amount of coins for the correct answer and to record the answer on the worksheet. Two students requested assistance by raising their hands but the participant was helping another student. He asked another student to help the two students. The student sat down with the two students and showed them how to count the coins and helped record the correct responses on the worksheet. The participant checked the work by the two students and thanked the student helper. The two students were able to correctly complete the rest of the worksheet without help afterwards. This was a demonstration of generosity by the students towards one another with support from the participant. In the meantime, verbal reinforcement was provided to the students who were completing their work.

The Native American student with intellectual disability had completed his worksheet and was teasing the teacher about being too old. The teacher restated the student's remarks by saying "I am old, too old" limping to another student to help. This was followed by additional assistance to students and use of pats on the head or giving applause to the students who were completing their work correctly. He told the students that they were doing a good job while walking around the classroom from student to student checking their work and giving individualized reinforcement. This showed the value of mastery, independence, and generosity. The participant whispered in a student's ear asking him to help another student. The participant covered multiple concepts on one worksheet that included pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and half dollars. The students counted out 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents, and other combinations. There was evidence of the value of belonging in the interaction between the students and the participant. He consistently responded to the questions about time, lunch, and provided assistance with

the assignment. Instruction was relaxed and not rigid or authoritative. The students worked in pairs or groups and received help when they requested it.

Although the three examples of instruction selected at random in this chapter did not necessarily reflect a culturally relevant lesson, the interactions between the students and the middle and high school participants showed motivation and instruction that challenged the students. Students were on task during the one hour as demonstrated by their input and discussions. In addition, the values of the Circle of Courage were observed during this time.

**Mastery in the high school.** The value of mastery was defined as being able to do one's best at a given time. The learned skills continued to be built upon resulting in improvement and progress. Mastery was conceptual when it involved feelings of success and confidence. It was manifested through successful mastering of specific IEP goals and good grades.

Student exemplars were evidenced throughout the observation period. The participant read and wrote notes on work handed in by the students. One assignment that gave the participant more insight about his students was entitled, "What I am Good At." The students wrote about their skills and talents including baseball, bowling, wrestling, writing, reading, music, drawing, guitar playing, and singing. Mastery was evidenced through collaborative work between peers and participant, which allowed for success and progress.

The participant modeled lessons and assignments by (1) using himself as an example, (2) using real money to teach money concepts (e.g., each student had their own bag of coins which came out of a large coin jar provided by the participant), (3) notifying

family members when students were doing well, and (4) using verbal and physical positive reinforcements with familial terms (e.g., Mijo, sweetie, Buddy, Bud) with students to build rapport. There was a large poster in the classroom drawn by a student of a happy hornet and a message about being a lifelong learner and contributing to society. In addition, peer helpers were utilized and encouraged by the participant. The students did not hesitate to help a peer when asked.

**Independence in the high school.** The value of independence was defined as being able to do something on one's own at a given time. The participant strongly stated, "The need to instruct, model, and then separate self from direct involvement and provide guidance at a given time."

Independence in community participation was evidenced through: (1) volunteer work at the hospital, (2) inclusion in general education classes where students excelled in swimming, DECA, Spanish, and teen sports, and (3) self-assessment by the students that equipped them with the skills to identify and express their limitations for their assigned tasks. One student with Prader Willi syndrome said she could not work in the gift shop because of the availability of snacks in the shop. The students wrote their own hall passes to increase their skills in writing and for telling time. Although the high school did not have a policy for hall passes, the participant required it to help the students increase their skills. The students followed the directions taught by the participant. This helped the students when they were taken out of their familiar environment. The routines and expectations the students learned helped them to achieve new challenges with success. They learned to find their work locations in the hospital; walk across two campuses; ride

the city bus to and from the high school and university; purchase a bus pass and use it with the meter; and pull the rope to stop the bus at appropriate stops.

The participant advocated for weaning the students from the teacher and provision of continued guidance from a distance. He reinforced the following statement with the students “All of us make bad choices in our lives, but it doesn’t mean we are bad people.” This statement was reinforced again in classroom assignments such as “People who are special in my life” and their impact. The students usually became absorbed in completing their writing assignments and discussions. One particular student wrote about his mother and stated “My mother is important to me because she gave me life”

**Generosity in the high school.** The participant defined generosity as giving from the heart and showing empathy for others. There was evidence of shared learning with peer helpers during math (e.g., counting money). Student exemplars with notes from the participant were posted on the classroom wall. The participant exhibited generosity by walking around campus with the students while they discussed their feelings, (2) giving individualized assistance when requested, (3) daily collaborative work, and (4) coordinating services for students. There were daily and weekly goals outlined in the lesson plans that were observed during instruction. Students had input about accepting new students into their classroom and creating a schedule to support the new students. The students were instructed on lessons that involved health. These included discussions about emotions, feelings, behavior, and respect. The product expected from this lesson was a paper entitled “What I like About Myself.” The participant gave specific instructions to the students about not listing any negative attributes in the written report.

**Belonging in the high school.** Belonging was defined as being part of a community in school or with family. The students and participant exhibited belonging through greetings and acknowledgement of visitors who came into their classroom. They told their classmates they missed them when they returned from an absence. Rapport and connection between the participant and the students were exhibited through; walks around campus; lunch; participation in DECA together; computer usage during free time and classroom discussions. The students were observed pointing out each other's skills and talents. For example, during one observation, a student couldn't think of a writing assignment on what he was good at until another student reminded him, "You have good wrestling moves." The participant informed the students "to be a part of somebody, or something, instead of being alone." The students were appreciated, recognized and reinforced with pats on the back, head rubs, thumbs up and applause. Verbal reinforcements such as excellent, good job, wow, you all have talents... were given 74 times and observed in four observations periods.

**Advice from a high school teacher to other teachers with Native American students.** The participant advised other teachers with Native American students (1) to be respectful of the students when they are absent for their cultural events, rather than being angry about the absences, (2) to respect the Native American students instead of putting them down, (3) to give respect to get respect, it cannot be demanded of someone, (4) to listen to their students instead of pretending to listen, and (5) to learn about the cultures represented in their classrooms through independent research.

Additional comments about special education programs and practice included (1) advocacy for targeted IEP goals that result in progress, (2) build on learned skills, and (3)

letter grades for children with disabilities was not a fair assessment. The participant's position was that children with disabilities should be assessed with an alternate form of assessment rather than letter grades. He indicated that the students do not have the skills to be assessed at the same level as students in general education.

Appendix L presents the Circle of Courage values for the high school and the linked combination of data from the observations, semi structured interviews, and the artifacts.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter presented the findings of a qualitative naturalistic study from an elementary, middle, and high school. Similarities and differences in interpretation and implementation of the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging are summarized in the following chapter five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Discussion**

#### **Overview**

Values have been understudied but are integral to Native American children and youth's education. Values have not been emphasized or represented to support Native American children and youth in schools across the nation. In the meantime, Native American children and youth are failing academically; there are high dropout rates; low graduation rates; and more Native American students being placed in special education. Due to the continued struggles of the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students there has been a push by the Native American community of researchers, educators, parents, and tribal leaders for culturally relevant education. Tippeconnic and Tippeconnic Fox (2012) stressed, "...values have been and continue to be an integral part of the socialization of youth in schools. Values are embedded in the approaches to teaching and learning, including within institutional vision and mission statements" (p. 842).

As Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2000) revealed, 90 percent of the 500,000 AI/AN students attending K-12 schools, were attending public schools and 10 percent were attending Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal schools. Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2000) pointed out that AI/AN students were over represented in special education:

Data suggest that AI/AN students are 'slightly over represented in the special education population' (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Although AI/AN students represent less than one percent of the school-age population, they represent 1.3 percent of the special education population (p. 1).



The study shows there are more students represented in special education than the overall AI/AN student population in schools. “AI/AN students are most often identified as having a specific learning disability, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or a speech/language impairment” (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2000, p. 1).

Native American’s concept of cultural values is analogous to the dominant society’s concept of moral values. D’Andrade (2008) defined values as “the concept of value is linked to the notion of something good...goodness appears to be an internal response” (p. 7) and value can be applied as “the degree to which something is morally right...values vary greatly in the degree they are internalized” (D’ Andrade, 2008, p.11). Another definition by Bagozzi, Sekerka, Hill, and Sguera (2013) stated “Values are desirable, trans-situational goals varying in importance that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (p. 70). (Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, & Harris, 2001). These definitions link to the guiding values listed below.

1. Generosity and cooperation
2. Independence and freedom
3. Respect for the elders and wisdom
4. Connectedness and love
5. Courage and responsibility
6. Indirect communication and noninterference
7. Silence, reflection, and spirit. (Skinner, 1999, p. 122).

The values Skinner advocated mirrors the values identified by Brendtro et al. (1990).

### **Findings Explanation**

In this section, the research questions are discussed beginning with the first question.

Question 1. Are urban special education teachers familiar with the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging?

The participants were not familiar with the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging as labeled by Brendtro et al. (1990). However, they realized that they were familiar with the values by different labels. The high school participant stated “I’ve never heard of it, no never.” He didn’t know if he taught the Circle of Courage values but has taught social skills to teach responsibility, moral values, being good, and life skills. He also declared that the world expected everyone to be responsible whether one was in special education or not.

The elementary participant stated she also knew very little about the Circle of Courage values. She heard it for the first time when I came into her classroom. Upon seeing the values she thought “I do those already.” She affirmed that she doesn’t call them the Circle of Courage values but she teaches values that are important to her and accepts other values as well. The middle school participant shared that she knew ‘nothing’ about the values at first until she researched them. As she became familiar with the values she too thought, “Those are beautiful and they are already my focus in my classroom.” She added that being good to one another, being self-sufficient and independent were important. She advocated “We all have to be the best person we can be so that society will welcome us. It doesn’t matter what kind of a disability someone might have whether it is intellectual, physical or cognitive. If it isn’t pushed and taught the students aren’t going to learn it.”

Two participants (middle and high school) pointed out society's expectations of people and it didn't matter whether if one had a disability or not. They focused their instruction to teach the values of social skills, moral values, and life skills. They wanted their children with disabilities to become equipped with appropriate skills to be accepted by society.

Although the participants declared they had little to no knowledge about the Circle of Courage values they were teaching values that were familiar to them. Their unfamiliarity with the values was an underlying assumption with reference to the participants. The following items were pointed out prior to beginning the study: (1) Mainstream values outweighed the acknowledgement of cultural values that children bring to the classroom; (2) Special Education teachers were unaware that they were utilizing cultural values through their daily instruction protocol and behavior; and (3) Special Education teachers were not familiar with the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence. The first item was verified by the participants' use of other labels for values that were most familiar to mainstream society but they had no familiarity with the cultural name of the Circle of Courage values. The second was also true by the participants' focus on teaching values shown in the lesson plans and prior discussions. The last item was explicit by the interview responses that they did not know about the Circle of Courage values.

Question 2. How do urban special education teachers support and encourage [or not] the expression of the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging, of urban school aged Native American students in school?

Listed in this section are examples of the participant's support and encouragement [or not] of their children with disabilities expression of the Circle of Courage values.

**Mastery.** There were striking differences in the definition of mastery between the elementary participant and the other two grade level participants from middle and high school. The students in each participant's classroom experienced success at varying levels.

At the beginning of the interview the elementary participant's initial response in one word as "positive" to the question about her experience with Native American students was disconcerting. Her emphasis was on academic achievement and standards as a definition for mastery. She maintained that reading, writing, and mathematics was content focused with children with disabilities and with intellectual disability.

In contrast the middle school and the high school participants had different opinions and methods for teaching the concept of mastery. The middle school participant pointed out two types of mastery: total mastery and mastery segment. She discussed "life skills" as total mastery and therefore the most important. Another examples of total mastery included toileting, functional words, and personal information. She considered them as lifelong skills necessary for survival. Mastery segment she attributed to reading such as vocabulary words, mathematics, and environmental signs. She indicated these as important and could be learned through repetition and modeling. The middle school participant defined mastery as the demonstration of understanding and knowledge performed under stress and pressure. Mastery segment were important but were on a lower level of the hierarchy of "must learn and know." She targeted total mastery important for her students to learn and know, which were reflected in the design of her

lessons. The high school participant stated that mastery was having the ability to do one's best at a given time. He stated that once a targeted goal was attained then one continued building on the learned skill until there was evidence of improvement and progress. He stated that when a person achieved, it gave that person feelings of confidence and success.

The elementary participant based mastery on academic performance which was measured as attainment of high benchmarks. There was added emphasis on scores. For students to earn a reward they had to receive a score of 80 percent or higher in reading, writing, and mathematics. Mastery could not be attained by effort or behavior. Closely linked to the scores were the rewards used as reinforcements for students who earned the high scores. The participant discussed a system that she referred to as the account item awards system, which was based on linking percentage scores to a rewards drawer beginning at 80 percent and higher. Higher scores meant better prizes. However, I wondered if the benchmark established at 80 percent was too high for children with disabilities. Because the frequency of rewards attained may have been low for the students to maintain motivation, interest, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Children were not observed receiving a reward during the study. The focus was on academics that "life skills" was not part of her voluntary discussion. She didn't address "life skills" until she was asked a clarifying question about whether or not she taught "life skills." The elementary participant was also observed during an unstructured day when students were leaving school for the day due to inclement weather. There was a relaxed atmosphere with students working on the computers developing cartoon stories using opaque pictures to tell their stories. Students who had completed their work were helping others. A math

lesson review on angles was conducted by the teacher. The review eventually turned into an art project using angles. A Native American student with ID was drawing beautiful cartoon caricatures (Minnie Mouse) free hand while another student requested for jazz music to be turned on. The teacher walked around the classroom and helped students or just visited casually with students who wanted to talk.

On the other hand, the middle school participant proudly shared a story about the Native American student with intellectual disability who was weaned from wearing diapers during the school year. The student experienced one accident the entire year which made the participant very proud. She also helped the same student with issues related to behavior. Again the student's behavior towards other students improved and was rewarded with a pretty glass turtle. The high school participant advocated against the use of a grading system for children with disabilities because the high school participant pointed out that the use of letter grades was not fair to children with disabilities and advocated for an alternative grading system for the students. He said the instruction focus with children with disabilities was different and not primarily on academics. He added that letter grades did not mean the same for children with disabilities. He advocated for learning appropriate skills. He has also observed that new teachers do not know how to grade students in special education. The concept of 'responsibility' resonated between the participants, which was an instructional focus for them.

The instruction methods between the participants differed. The middle school and the high school participants provided numerous examples until the students understood the assignments which were evident by their responses to the teacher's questions. They allowed the students to work together in pairs and or in small groups with much verbal

interaction while they discussed the work assigned. In contrast, the elementary participant provided specific and direct instruction in the content areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. The students were encouraged to listen, look, and do. The elementary school participant created and provided examples for the students to see and replicate as shown (e.g., right angles, obtuse angles). The students were provided the tools to create the examples. There was minimum interaction between the students during work time.

However, there was also similarity in the lessons as reflected in the lesson on sequencing. The middle school participant had the students retell in sequence a trip they took to downtown. The students said this was difficult because they kept getting out of sequence while they attempted retelling of the trip. There was also a similar activity in the elementary classroom, when student were asked to retell a story they had read. Again, the students had difficulty with the activity.

The middle school participant selected a student each day as “leader for the day” who was responsible for leading circle time. The leader had a choice of the items to review and the method to use to call on students randomly (e.g., Popsicle sticks or drawing of names). One particular morning, I observed a student who needed use of a communication device selected as “leader.” She was nervous, but as she continued the lesson she became more comfortable. The class was respectful and responded to her questions when she randomly called on them by drawing Popsicle sticks from a can. The names of the students were written on the Popsicle sticks. The student leader was so proud that she had a smile on her face the entire time she was leading the group. Student work was displayed in the hallway outside the classroom, which contrasted with the elementary and the high school. She wanted other students to see the work the students

were doing. In contrast, there were no observations of a student leader in either the elementary or the high school classrooms.

The methods for inclusion or [not] at each of the levels also differed. Mastery at the high school level was the implementation of inclusion into general education classes where the students experienced success. Some examples that stood out were: the student with Prader Willi was an assistant to the Spanish teacher and helped general education students learn conversational Spanish. One student played on the high school soccer team and another on the swimming team. The coaches of both classes requested for the students to remain on the team because they excelled in the respective sports. There were two students who were in the general education history and English classes and were also doing well.

In contrast the middle school and elementary teachers had little to no inclusion programs. The middle school participant stated that their inclusion was limited because there weren't enough electives offered in the school for her students to participate in. Instead she reversed the inclusion by inviting general education teachers and students to her classroom to help or to read to the students. The elementary participant stated that the Common Core standards provided the in depth instruction and understanding necessary for the students in her classroom, therefore there wasn't any need to send them to general education classes. She also stated that her students had limited reading and writing abilities and inclusion wouldn't be a benefit for them. In addition, she stated that attention deficit issues limited benefit from inclusion in general education classes.

The manner that the participants communicated with the students and the parents differed at varying levels. The high school participant wrote comments on each



assignment that the students submitted. The walls in the classroom displayed student work and each had positive comments on them. In a lesson on “What I am good at” the students were instructed to not write any negative comments on the assignment. One student could not name what he was good at until another student told him he had good wrestling moves. This was one example of the students’ support of each other and how well they helped one another.

The three participants used rewards and prizes to promote continued success by the students. However, these differed between the participants. The elementary participant had a formalized system for rewards designated by percentage scores aligned to the “rewards drawer” in the classroom. She gave verbal praise that included “you are amazing and it is impressive.” The participant taught students self-expression in multiple ways which included utilization of a strong voice and saying “Stop, I don’t like it when you...” and becoming the best person one could be through acts of good behavior.

The middle school participant utilized rewards that included happy meals from McDonalds, invited students to eat lunch with her and gave prizes that the students liked (e.g., a shiny glass turtle). In addition, the participant knew individual students’ likes and dislikes and she made it her priority to get to know the students and parents personally through home visits.

In contrast, the elementary school participant’s focus on academics challenged the students but there weren’t any stories of success or evidence of students who had achieved the sought after percentage scores. Although, the benchmarks were set, they might have been too difficult to attain. The participant did not consider life skills as a priority. At one point, during a reading lesson, one of the Native American students said

“I am marking everything wrong” as he fell further and further behind. The participant did not stop for the Native American student to catch up; she continued on and stated “if you missed them, you missed them.” In addition, there were remarks that weren’t supportive or encouraging “Are you so tired that your head is so heavy that you can’t hold it up?” and “I noticed you are an excellent reader, but when it comes to nonsense words, your brain can’t figure it out.” Another example was a student who said, “My mom is in the hospital, she had surgery.” The information went unacknowledged.

The high school participant gave lots of verbal praise (e.g., good job, excellent) including use of familial terms (e.g., Mijo, sweetie, bud, buddy). He also gave pats on the back of students, head rubs, thumbs up, and applauded by clapping. He consistently made contact with family members about each student’s progress through letters, notes, and phone calls and texting. This participant gave a total of 74 in four observations visits. The elementary participant had the least number of verbal praise given with a total of three.

The concept aligns with the discussion about high benchmarks by Castagno and Brayboy (2008). They pointed out that Native American families and community members favored challenge and high benchmarks for Native American students with and without disabilities. They wanted the children to experience success in targeted areas of need. In addition, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) indicated that Native American communities were pushing to advance academic learning by Native American students. The outcome the communities desired was for students to become knowledgeable in academics, cultural information and languages. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) maintained that educational institutions “should facilitate the acquisition of all of these knowledges

and skills-what we might call a ‘both/and’ approach rather than an ‘either/or’ approach” (p. 960). However, we need to keep in mind that “standardized tests correlates with socioeconomic status and the provision of mainstream experiences” (Fox 1999, p. 161), which puts Native American students at a disadvantage.

Many Native American students “have been included in large-scale standardized testing without accommodations for limited English proficiency, even though many are LEP students, whether identified as such or not” (Fox, 1999, p. 165). The assessment historically utilized by Native American people for community activities were authentic assessments. This type of assessment allowed for evaluation of real life activities and gave the participants the opportunity to evaluate their performance and to make changes for improvement (Fox, 1999). The following is a story told by Maslow about teaching mastery to a toddler by the Blackfeet people and retold by Brendtro et al. (1990).

I can remember ...a toddler trying to open a door to a cabin. He could not make it.

This was a big, heavy door, and he was shoving and shoving. Well, Americans would get up and open the door for him. The Blackfeet Indians sat for half an hour while the baby struggled with that door, until he was able to get it open himself. He had to grunt and sweat, and then everyone praised him because he was able to do it himself (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 53).

Cook-Lynn (2008) stated “Traditional American Indian systems of educating were characterized by observation, participation, assimilation, and experiential learning rather than by the low-context, formal instruction characteristic of Euro-American schooling” (p. 488). Cook-Lynn further explained that “Education was highly dependent

on intrapersonal, interpersonal, kinesthetic, and spatial learning as expressed in oral language and active involvement within the tribal culture” (p. 488).

The characteristic of “learned helplessness” goes against the values exemplified in independence, which is responsibility and dependability with an “I can” attitude as explained by Brendtro et al. (1990). They explained that “learned helplessness” (p. 52) occurs when the child senses a lack of power “over their own behavior and their environment” (p. 52) and others have control over their destiny. To remedy this issue one needs to be given choices, empowerment, support, dignity and accountability.

**Independence.** The participants supported and encouraged [or not] “independence” through a variety of methods that were observed or heard through stories from them. The participants emphasized the importance of giving choices to students to help instill and strengthen the value of independence.

The three participants had similar definitions of the value of independence. The elementary participant defined independence as self-efficacy and having a sense of responsibility. The contrast was the methods each participant used to teach this value.

Two participants’ (middle and high school) definitions were identical. The definition they gave was “being able to do something on ones’ own that one couldn’t perform before.” There was similarity between the middle and high school participants’ instructional sequence for independence. They provided the process in this order: instruct, model, and then separate self from direct instruction and provide guidance from a distance. Both participants were adamant about the need to focus on a few IEP goals for instruction. Both teachers supported the need to build on goals individual students

mastered. Both participants modeled the process during instruction and other activities with the students.

The middle school participant taught independence skills by taking the students on a field trip and did not allow the students to bring a chaperone from home. Her goal was to teach the students to order lunch from a menu independently. The other goal was to shop independently by using the correct amount of currency to pay for the items. The middle school students went shopping for items to put into the food baskets during holidays.

The high school participant taught independence by taking the students out of their familiar surroundings and assigned them volunteer responsibilities at a local hospital. The students had to learn new routines and responsibilities in addition to learning to ride the city bus. The students also learned to recognize their capabilities and limitations. The students realized that the work they performed was necessary when people from the public expressed their appreciation. The help they provided included cleaning the hospital cafeteria; sorting mail; and stocking the gift shop. Not only did the students learn to get from one location to another. They also learned to navigate to their appropriate work location within the hospital. Next, get their supplies and materials sequentially (e.g., buckets and rags, correct amount of soap, and warm water). Then begin working (e.g., wiped tables, trays, salsa jars, salt and pepper shakers, refill condiments, and put away in proper locations). To compound the feelings of independence, the high school students walked across two campuses; got on the bus; walked to their work site; and retraced their paths to go home on the city bus.

The elementary participant taught independence through self-advocacy and instructed her students to be risk takers. One statement observed was “Be Brave, no matter what, even if: you are scared; you are on your own; you are laughed at and teased by your friends; feeling dumb; challenged by your friends; and you are wrong.” She instructed them to stand behind their decisions. Circle time at the elementary level was used as consultation time about a variety of topics that included: weather, appropriate dress for weather, and behavior.

The participants implemented “choices” in a variety of ways, the high school participant expected his students to write their own hall passes by writing the destination and time of departure. Although, the high school did not require hall passes the participant utilized it to help students increase their writing and time telling skills. If students needed to leave the classroom, they wrote a pass, sometimes with assistance from another student.

The elementary participant provided choices to the students that included designated areas in the classroom such as a waiting room, help wanted signs, and safe rooms. The designated spaces gave the students a choice of waiting in the particular place until he or she was ready to rejoin the group. The participant respected the choice by the students to use the designated space. Although, I did not observe this being utilized during my observations, but indeed noticed the help wanted sign in the classroom. The students could utilize one of these if they did not feel ready to learn with the class which the participant honored. Sometimes the students would use this to delay consequences if they got into trouble for behavior or for schoolwork. In contrast, the middle school participant allowed choices through flex sequencing of lessons. The middle school

students were allowed to continue past the designated stop points in the lessons as long as they felt comfortable. The students had a choice of changing the sequence of the lessons by choosing to view a video that accompanied each lesson prior to the other pages. The video had little games they could play as a group that made learning fun for everyone. The participant was aware that the students wanted to do the “fun” part of the lesson before the mundane act of learning vocabulary words. She teased the students about this to show that she knew what they were doing.

The high school participant stated repeated times, “that they weren’t bad and that they were good kids. But sometimes we all made bad choices which got us in trouble, but bad choices did not make a person bad.” His lessons reflected the goals he was teaching the students. His goal in the lessons was about making appropriate choices (e.g., What I am good at).

There were similarities between the participant’s attitudes. The elementary classroom wall had student made posters of drawings which depicted Samurai characteristics. These included: courage, honor, courtesy, justice, honesty, loyalty, and duty. The participant also gave the students a chance to fix their mistakes. In addition, she listened to the students. She often responded to the students’ questions and clarified her directions if the students were confused about their assignments.

The middle school participant was emphatic about caring about the students. She repeatedly stated, “Show you care, care about what they like and care about who they are.” This attitude carried over to her support of the parents by helping them develop behavior strategies for their children. Two participants (elementary and middle school) indicated that the educational trips in the community were purposeful. The elementary

school participant wanted her students to use the trips to improve their points of references. She wanted the students to learn to navigate in the community. The trip to the agricultural farm was used to increase vocabulary words. The middle school participant utilized the trips to teach independence (e.g., shopping) and contacted parents to ensure cultural appropriateness (e.g., the snake museum).

The middle school participant was cognizant of the need for privacy in building trust, particularly with the Native American student with intellectual disability. This was apparent when she helped him increase skills with toileting and positive behavior. She advised usage of soft approachable behavior when building trust. She discouraged behaviors that were overbearing and adamantly stated “absolutely no yelling.” She used hand signals and head nods (e.g., thumbs up or thumbs down, nodding to the side and or down) as signals for success or not. She instilled confidentiality between herself and the student by informing the student “it is just between you and me” or “let’s go outside and talk.” Appropriate behavior was taught by monitoring the behavior from a distance (e.g., often during recess and lunch). She monitored the students to ensure that the targeted behavior was maintained during free time. After a month of success the student was often rewarded with a prize.

The middle school participant wanted the students to see her as “real” with issues and faults. She stated the students shouldn’t only see their teacher as the person who stands at the board talking all the time. Similarly, the high school participant used strategies for maintenance of confidentiality when students needed support. He was observed taking students aside and talking with them. Additionally, he took students for “walks” when he observed agitation in student’s behavior. He stopped whatever was



happening and took the class for a walk. These walks were around campus where he talked with students about their issues. The elementary school participant dealt with behavior issues during the morning circle time. The discussions were with the group without singling out individual students.

The three participants agreed on the issue of “learned helplessness.” They stated that students exhibited this behavior when adults hovered over them by doing things for them all their lives. The participants stated this type of behavior does not help the students. It prohibits them from taking risks and responsibility. The middle school participant pointed out dependent behaviors exhibited by students with learned helplessness which included wetting; holding on to people they know, not talking, acting intimidated, and ploys to keep the caretaker close. If she noticed any of these behaviors in her students, she would begin working on one behavior at a time. She worked with the student and the parents until the dependent behavior was eliminated.

The participants’ behavior exhibited their support and encouragement during interaction with the students. The middle and high school teachers modeled their excitement and enthusiasm during the delivery of the lessons. In particular, the high school participant expended so much enthusiasm and energy during the presentation of the lessons. I wondered if the participant was tired daily. Both participants (middle and high school) teased the students during their interactions. Both participants stated they loved their work and that they would not think of doing anything else. The high school participant told his friends “I go to work to learn from the students” adding that retirement was not an option because work was so much fun.

The middle and high school participants communicated constantly with each student asking if they needed help. They got down to eye level with the students and gave attention to students. The middle school participant consistently tended to those who were hurt or helped students locate materials for class, assisted with devices, gave gratitude to student peer helpers, and continually gave praise to students. The students mirrored the personalities of the middle and high school teachers. This was demonstrated in multiple ways through greetings and seating visitors who entered the classroom. Their actions exhibited the values of belonging and generosity.

At the participant's (middle and high school) request, the students helped their peers who were struggling with classwork, got supplies for someone, and patiently waited for each other during meal times. Throughout the observation period there were no misbehaviors observed in the three classrooms.

**Generosity.** The definition of generosity by the three participants varied. Generosity was demonstrated through giving of gifts, food baskets, and volunteer work. The high school participant defined generosity as “giving” of one’s self from the heart and showing empathy for others. The middle school participant defined generosity as being nice and getting along with others, which included giving money for the food baskets. The elementary participant stated that generosity was making and giving of projects. In addition the showing of kindness the students demonstrated through their emotions, guidance, and awareness also showed generosity. There was unanimous agreement between the three participants that the attribute of “giving” from someone to another individual was pivotal when showing generosity.

The differences were the methods used to teach this value. The middle school participant stipulated that she has observed higher functioning students being more generous than the students in her class. She said that her kids were not generous, and that maybe some of them even felt that they were owed the attention. The students have never been taught how to be generous because for most of their lives they have been receiving one to one attention from adults. Sometimes the students treated each other mean in class, which she did not condone. She taught the students to say: Thank you and please daily to instill the concept of generosity. She purposefully designed shopping trips where the students shopped for “others.” She also collected money from the students to purchase food baskets that the class gave to others in the community. She provided opportunities for students to experience the giving of gifts. The remaining participants (high school and elementary) did not specify whether their students were mean or not.

The high school participant stated he promoted well-being through lessons on health (e.g., mental, social, and physical). The discussions involved emotions, respect, good and bad behavior. As part of his instruction he led discussions about feelings. One example was “how do you feel about the loss of an uncle?” The student said, “Sad, it doesn’t feel right and it feels like you have a pain in your heart.” He used himself as an example most of the time in the discussions. Another example was “I did not have a good self-concept about myself in my younger days” so I had to get help. Now I’ve improved in that area. The discussion centered on self-esteem and he taught the students to look for strengths in themselves and each other. They were instructed to not focus on weaknesses.

The middle school participant provided opportunities for students to talk about their feelings and issues around a campfire (e.g., a plastic log with a red light

underneath). She welcomed parents into her classroom to share their concerns and cultural issues. The parents gave their input about the topics being taught and or sites visited on field trips. She knew the parents personally because she made it her priority to visit the home of each of her students during district parent-teacher conferences. She praised and rewarded the students for their efforts and achievements. The high school participant included parents and other family members in the weekly letters he sent home. In addition, he sent a welcome letter at the beginning of the school year.

In contrast, the elementary teacher did not state the methods for including parents and or family members in the education provided to their children. But, her (elementary) class was involved in community outreach. These included hospitals, homeless shelters, parishes, and veteran centers. While making the crafts, the students gave up their holiday parties. The crafts the students made included: cards, flag, place mats, wreaths, bread, and door napkins. Since the students could not go to the sites where their crafts were given away, the participant videotaped the events which were shared with the students. Two participants' classes (middle and elementary) shopped and made crafts to give to others. The high school participant encouraged and supported the value of generosity through the clothing bank as a community service and volunteer work at the hospital. He prepared the students to do both services through sequential instruction and modeling. The students laundered, folded, hung, and sized the clothes for easier access for students who came in to receive coats or clothing.

There were individual demonstrations of generosity by the students at each level. One elementary student was observed sharing his protractor with another student while he waited patiently. The act of generosity caused him to fall behind the rest of the class

by completing his work last. Another student (middle school) was observed getting another student's coat while she went to the bathroom. He waited for her while the rest of the class went outside ahead of him. When she returned, he opened the door and allowed her to go out first. A high school student was observed helping two students complete their worksheet on counting money. The participant noticed the students struggling and requested a student to help, so he walked over and sat down with them. He showed them how to count the money to get the correct answers on the worksheet.

In the middle school, general education students came in daily to help the students or the teacher (e.g., getting the snacks from the cafeteria, completing assignments, and reading to the students). The middle school participant gave a big screen TV and her living room furniture to one of her student's family when she realized that the family had no furniture in their mobile home. She told the family that all she wanted in return was for the student to come to school each day. She wanted him to participate with the class and to make friends. She informed the parents that she and the class missed the student when he was not in school.

The attributes of big heartedness and kindness to others were discussed by Cajete (2000) that "people realized themselves by being of service to their community and by caring for their place" (p. 95). The participants demonstrated affective behaviors and were observed tending to hurts and helping students immediately by offering genuine compassion. Two participants (middle and elementary) had students who had cuts on their fingers. The middle school participant had a student who was pushed down by another student. When they (elementary and middle school) saw or heard about the hurts they immediately dropped everything they were doing and tended to the students. Two

participants (middle and high school) performed laundering tasks for students who needed clean clothes, back packs, and or jackets. The middle school participant helped students put on their jackets and zipped them up before going outside. She did not want them catching a cold and missing school.

Two participants (middle and high school) shared their lesson plans that reflected targeted goals for each week. Their lesson plans were related to appropriate behavior and goal setting. On the other hand, there were no lesson plans shared by the elementary participant.

Support and encouragement were exhibited by the three participants in their involvement with community outreach projects. The methods and strategies utilized by the three participants aligned to the story told by Brendtro et al. (1990). The story was about how Native American people viewed generosity and unselfishness as one of the highest virtues. Young men would look forward to their first hunts so they could give meat to people in need. In this example, the participants supported generosity by encouraging the children with disabilities to give and share crafts, time, skills, and volunteer work.

**Belonging.** Belonging to a community was a definition from the high school participant. The community could be school or with family. The middle school participant defined belonging as being accepted; it was a place of trust and feeling welcomed; in the classroom, home, or in society. The elementary participant defined belonging as being a part of a larger group; sticking close together; being equal; and protecting each other by looking out for one another.

The participants taught the value of belonging in multiple ways. There were similarities in the manner in which the students at all levels were cordial. They greeted the visitors who came into their classrooms. The elementary participant's classroom had a display of a hand art. It depicted little fish outlined with student's hands and the fish had the student's names on them swimming with a large whale under the caption: We are Fierce Learners. For example, the elementary participant demonstrated and encouraged belonging with group huddles and celebrations such as the birthday parties. Additionally, by adopting the Samurai as the class logo and name gave the students a sense of belonging. The daily class recital of the Lobo mission and the pledge with the students in two languages (Spanish and English) instilled the concept that they owned the group mission. The participant's references to the Samurai character traits of honor, dignity, and purposeful fighting, provided the model that students attempted to replicate within themselves. The students were encouraged to not take "no" for an answer from anyone. They needed to realize that they brought talents and gifts to any group the same as everybody.

The high school participant stated that the students often informed their peers that they were missed on days they were absent. He instructed the students to be a part of something and somebody rather than being alone. The middle school participant honored the student's bilingualism when they used their primary language to respond to questions. She did not make a big deal about it if the student did not interpret their responses. She designed and implemented reverse inclusion. Whereby, she invited the general education students, teachers, and administrators to come into the classroom. She asked them to help; read; celebrate; or to just drop in; and say hello. Additionally, she requested the

general education teachers to invite her class to their classrooms to attend presentations and or to just visit. Furthermore, she instilled belonging with her students through home visits because she wanted to know where each of her students lived. This allowed her awareness of the travel distance that her students made to and from school each day. The middle school participant demonstrated her support and encouragement of belonging by getting to know the students. It was her priority to know the families and to find out the students' likes and dislikes. She respected the families' cultures by talking with parents and getting input from them about the do's and don'ts for instructional topics (e.g., snakes, owls). This also included field trips. She utilized affective behavior characteristics by being approachable, speaking in a soft voice, and informing students "it is just between you and me" to instill trust with her students. She portrayed these characteristics when she was teaching appropriate behavior during daily interaction with her students. The importance of attendance was stressed with her students. They needed to come to school to learn but also to make friends and socialize. Two participants, the high school and the middle school, stated the importance of daily school attendance in establishing belonging. They pointed out that if students are not in class they are not only missing out on academics but also missing out on the interaction with their peers.

Displays of student work in each participant's classroom proved support and pride in every student's success. The participants were proud of the accomplishments of their students. These were exemplified with comments (high school and elementary) on the students' work. The remarks by the teachers impacted the students. It made them proud of their work and they took time to do good work because they knew it would be displayed for others to see.



The middle school participant was so attuned to her students that she knew the day when her Native American student with intellectual disability learned to whistle. It was a coincidence that on the same day there was a science lesson about a newly discovered whistling owl. The participant wanted the student to read the passage and told everyone that the student could now whistle. She said “Where is ... he just learned to whistle today, I want him to read this paragraph about the whistling owl.” The student had stepped out to the bathroom and when he returned; the class was waiting for him and told him about the whistling owl.

The elementary participant celebrated each of her student’s birthdays by baking a cake and a party. This activity had one of the Native American students talking into the next day about his cake. He was so proud and happy that the class had celebrated his birthday the day before.

The high school and middle school participants gave lots of verbal, physical, and tangible reinforcements. The middle school participant paid out of pocket for many of the rewards and prizes (e.g., happy meals from McDonalds), which were delivered by the bus drivers. The high school participant demonstrated support for the value of belonging through the positive behavior he exhibited and the verbal reinforcements he consistently gave to the students. Students were comfortable with the participant, which was exhibited in their rapport with him and each other. The Native American student with intellectual disability teased his teacher about his favorite NFL team, the Dallas Cowboys, getting beat by the Redskins. During the lesson on money the teacher teased the student about the Cowboys beating the Redskins when the student got some of his answers incorrect. This

motivated the student to correct his answers. He quickly erased his incorrect answers and corrected them with help from a peer.

The middle and high school participants strongly advocated for “respect.” This included respect for other cultures, respect for Native American students, and giving respect in order to receive respect. The high school participant was adamant about being respectful to the students. He stated, “One cannot demand respect, respect has to be earned.” The middle and high school participants encouraged active listening to students and parents as a form of showing respect. The high school participant advised other teachers to research the cultures represented in their classrooms in order to gain knowledge and understanding. The middle school and the elementary school participants agreed that quiet students did not lack knowledge or understanding. Phillips (1983) and Greenbaum (1985) corroborated the viewpoint that Native American children have a tendency to learn through observation and demonstrate their knowledge by doing and not through outward actions. A study by Greenbaum (1985) found differences in Choctaw students’ individual speaking utterances as much shorter and spoke less frequently than the non-Indian students. Greenbaum found that the Choctaw students also had difficulty with floor-taking attempts and “spent more time gazing at peers when the teacher was talking. Taken together, these findings seem to reflect cultural differences that could well involve functional difficulties in classroom interaction between Indian students and their non-Indian teachers” (Greenbaum, 1985, p. 110).

The middle school participant realized that the Native American practice of avoidance of eye contact as respectful behavior. This knowledge demonstrated her awareness about cultural behavior. On the other hand, other educators have viewed the

lack of eye contact by Native Americans as disrespectful behavior and have been used to stereotype the Native American people. There are situations when children and youth will not look another person in the eye. For example, the aversion of direct eye contact is a sign of respect for an elder. The gaze is usually on another part of the face and not directly into the eyes of the other person. This aligns to my great grandmother's teaching when she stated "Do not stare at people and do not look into their eyes. You need to be humble and respectful."

Question 3. How do special education teachers operationalize the values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

The participants operationalized the Circle of Courage values through unique methods and strategies. The middle and high school participants utilized peer helpers. Children with disabilities or students from general education offered assistance. Children with disabilities helped their peers in multiple ways such as counting money, telling time, getting another student's coat, waiting for them, and sharing supplies and materials. In contrast, although the elementary school participant encouraged the students to look around and help other students, they did not voluntarily provide assistance.

The students in the three sites provided assistance to others when they were called out by name by their teachers but was not readily given. The students waited for an invitation or encouragement to get help from their teachers. Cleary and Peacock (1998) pointed out that Native American children and youth preferred collaborative learning activities and group work rather than competitive methods of instruction. Cleary and Peacock also found that Native American students preferred to not stand out academically. In addition, Cleary and Peacock (1998) found that intrinsic motivation and

self-determination methods worked well with Native American students. Other methods that raised the academic motivation of Native American students were seeing and watching various role models, purposeful learning activities, and development of competence in areas of weaknesses.

The focus of the high school participant on development of life skills, moral values, and community volunteer projects were integrated with the daily lessons. These were taught through discussions and writing activities. The students were given opportunities to verbalize input during the discussions. The high school participant often used his experiences as examples during introduction of the lessons. The activities the students were expected to complete were within their conceptual realm for success.

The three participants advocated the support of society's expectation that if one had a disability or not the expectations were the same for everyone. Society expected appropriate behavior and self-efficacy, which were repeated by the middle and high school participants. They worked with individual students on targeted behaviors until the desired behavior was achieved and the student received a reward.

The middle and high school participants' expectation for every student was to attain the goals set for them through targeted IEP goals through increments of small steps. After successful achievement of students on targeted goals, the participants monitored the students for maintenance. Monitoring was from a distance unknown to the students. The teachers maintained that guidance from a distance was necessary to avoid hovering tendencies and to allow the students to become fully independent. The students were rewarded for their progress with verbal reinforcements, rewards, food, applause, pats, phone calls, texting, letters and notes to parents. There was unified support for

children with disabilities to function independently after they were taught the targeted skills.

The middle and high school participants operationalized collaboration and group work daily with the students. The middle school participant often utilized teamwork and the high school participant used group work. The elementary participant allowed the students to work in groups during an unstructured day. They were talking and mingling around the classroom while having fun improving their computer, writing and math skills. This interaction benefited communication skills within the group and with their teacher. It also strengthened critical thinking skills and cognitive development as pointed out by Ochs (1986). Ochs discussed that “through their participation in social interactions, children come to internalize and gain performance competence in sociocultural defined contexts” (p. 2). (Leontyev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978).

The Circle of Courage values can be operationalized through implementation of many of the methods displayed in the classrooms that were included in the research in curriculum and school life. Additional methods would include development of indigenous epistemological thought that knowledge comes from the heart and that the destination is to gain “wisdom.” Students would learn to be responsible, respectful, and to develop an altruistic attitude prior to developing textbook knowledge. Curriculum would include purposeful selection of material that was inclusive of the cultures represented in particular education systems. The information presented in the curriculum would need to be factual and reviewed for accuracy. The integration of the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging in daily classroom and school-wide activities through literature, writing, behavior, and modeled by the education community

members will impact everyone involved. Thousand et al. (1997) pushed for an educational reform that utilized the Circle of Courage paradigm for curriculum, professional development and teacher collaboration.

According to Nam, Roehrig, Kern, and Reynolds (2012), teachers often experienced challenges when implementing culturally relevant teaching strategies. The challenges were separated into two categories as external or internal by the teachers. External challenges such as “science standards, parents, community, and student attitude” (p. 160), were challenges that the teacher had no control over. The internal challenges included “lack of knowledge about the American Indian culture, low awareness, and less connection with the American Indian community” (p. 160). Some teachers felt that American Indian students lacked knowledge about their culture, thus choosing to fail in school. Yazzie (1999) shared ways Native American students responded to ridicule, hurt, or anger in a quote by Locust who stated these emotions were often “masked by a proud silence” (Yazzie, 1999, p. 85). Throughout the observations conducted during the study the behavior of anger or hurt described by Yazzie (1999) and Locust were not observed.

Teachers who lacked knowledge about traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) expressed challenging perspectives. On the other hand, there were teachers (native and non-native) who recognized the importance of Native perspective in education through use of stories and traditions and invited Native American cultural knowledge into their classrooms. Some examples of Native American cultural knowledge were stories, legends, beliefs, values, and respect for nature as revealed by Nam et al. (2012).

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) shared a quote by a tribal leader “do not teach our children our culture; use our culture to teach them” (p. 956). (Belgrade et al., 2002).

Additional recommendations from Castagno and Brayboy (2008) included:

Using images of tribal life, projecting an unhurried demeanor when interacting with Indigenous students, integrating oral and written tribal histories and stories with the curriculum, teaching through observation, working from student strengths, and inviting elders and other communities members to teach lessons (p. 956).

One participant conducted the district parent teacher conferences in the homes of students. This did not require the parents to come to the school because she wanted to become better acquainted with the communities and homes the students came from. The practice of visiting parents in their homes is supported by Native American researchers and educators. Cajete (1994) pointed out that community involvement by everyone was very important as each person was considered a contributing member of his or her community. The community members in turn support their members, through the concept of being related (Cajete, 1994). This is a concept which supports the education institution but it must go both ways between educators and the community for success.

Recommendations for teachers included:

Teachers are also advised to become familiar with the environments in which their students live by visiting homes, spending time at community events, observing and asking questions, working with students on community-based research projects, incorporating local events into the curriculum, tapping

community resources, and allowing elders to become participants in the teaching process. (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 971).

The attitudes and behaviors of the middle and high school participants stimulated the expression of the Circle of Courage values in the classrooms. The middle school participant showed affective behavior characteristics. She teased the students, was actively involved, walked around the classroom, and got down to eye level to help and talk to the students about their assignment and other topics. One example was when the participant was going to the front of the room; a student was sitting at his desk with his legs stretched out. As the teacher stepped over his legs she said, "Please move your lovely legs" the student immediately complied with a grin. The participant showed enthusiasm and her love for her work was reflected in the lessons and her behavior with the students. She was spontaneous in her actions during instruction; she would answer her phone whenever it rang because it was usually a therapist, a social worker, and or a parent calling her. In fact, this was the first time this behavior of answering the phone during class time was observed. She did not ignore her phone calls because they were about her students and therefore important to her. She would stop and troubleshoot a student's communication device, or tend to a student's hurt or help find materials for students. The students trusted her and they were comfortable in their interactions with her. The students in the middle school participant's class mirrored her attitude and behavior.

The high school participant stimulated the expression of the Circle of Courage values through his positive attitude and enthusiastic behavior. He was actively involved with the students through his consistent interaction and by walking around to monitor the



progress of the students. He did not sit during any of the observations; he was constantly standing, walking, or squatting at eye level talking with students. The love he had for his job working with students was evident in his lessons and instruction. The participant showed affective behavior characteristics; he was approachable, had a friendly demeanor, and tended to students when he sensed a need (e.g., talk, feeling down, hurt). One example was the 'walks' the class took when he perceived agitation with his students. The participant walked with the student who was in need and listened to the student. If the student was feeling bad or sad he would make time to talk and provided counsel. He was adamant about respecting students and advocated for giving respect before getting respect from students and others. He repeatedly informed students that they were not bad kids but instead we all made bad decisions but that did not make us bad. He knew the skill levels of the students which helped with successful inclusion programs. The students in his class were involved with volunteer work at the local hospital. Again the students were successful with this endeavor. His positive attitude was evident in the behavior of the students. The parents trusted him because he kept in close communication with them on a weekly basis. The students were valued which the students were aware of, as evidenced in the comfortable manner they behaved with the participant.

The elementary participant stimulated the expression of the Circle of Courage values through community outreach projects that were created by the students. The students experienced belonging through the group huddles, celebrations, the class logo and the class mission. The participant was reserved in her attitude and behavior but listened to the students because she immediately responded to their remarks and questions. The participant conducted her lessons sitting down the majority of the time and

students came to her for assistance. Her expectations were high and the students were challenged with the work content which they took in stride by working hard.

The Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging, were displayed in multiple ways during the research period. Especially noted was the range in differences in the number of positive reinforcements of 74 by the high school participant to three by the elementary school participant. Another difference was the middle school participant who extended support to the parents of the students. She was a strong proponent for development of partnerships with parents and made it her priority to conduct home visits. The primary goal was to know each student in her class and discuss cultural issues and concerns with the parents so they could be addressed appropriately.

One of the biggest differences was the implementation of the value of belonging between the three participants. The elementary teacher designed classroom activities that created opportunities for the students to work together within the special education classroom. However, they did not participate in activities in the larger school environment. The students did not participate in general education classes because the elementary participant indicated that the student's reading levels were too low and therefore the students would not succeed. The participant also indicated that they were already learning from use of the common core standards for each subject taught in the elementary special education classroom. The students were segregated from the rest of the school community with no students in general education classes.

The middle school participant utilized reverse inclusion by inviting general education students, teachers, and administrators into the special education classroom. The

participant encouraged the general education teachers to include her class to their classrooms for presentations and or for other activities. Although general education students and teachers came into the middle school special education classroom to read and or to help the students, the students in the special education class were still segregated and did not belong with the larger student population and school. The participant had made some progress during lunchtime by getting the students to eat their lunch in the cafeteria with the rest of the student population. The middle school participant indicated that the students with disabilities from her class did not participate in general education classes because of the scarcity of general education classes available.

The high school students with disabilities were included in general education classes that included DECA, swimming, Spanish, English, history, physical education, and teen sports. The students experienced success in all of these classes. In addition the students participated in volunteer work at a local hospital. The high school participant provided opportunities for the students to experience belonging to the greater school population, school and to the greater community.

Another area that the three participants differed was in their views of disability based on their prior employment experiences and or personal encounters. For example the middle school participant shared a personal story about her beginnings in special education. She was in another field until the school her son attended began calling her and caused her to miss so much work that she left her job and became a teacher's assistant at her son's school. Her son had an identified disability. Her views of disability shaped her definition of mastery and her expectations from the students. She viewed

mastery as two components (e.g., mastery segment and total mastery). Mastery segment was academics and she viewed this as lesser than total mastery in levels of importance for learning. She viewed total mastery as paramount in importance because she said that students needed this type of mastery to make it in the real world. Total mastery included life skills and social skills. Although she taught academics (e.g., reading, writing, and mathematics), she deemed students as successful when they learned a particular life skill (e.g., toileting and personal information).

The high school participant had prior experience working with people with behavior disorders and worked in a psychiatric hospital for many years. He designed his classroom curriculum around building self-esteem and knew when the students in his classroom were feeling agitated and needed to take a walk to talk about their issues. He also included academics (e.g., writing, reading, and mathematics) in daily instruction. The academic content areas were integrated with elements and discussions related to self-esteem and social skills.

Although the elementary participant had taught children from multicultural families in special education for 25 years, she did not provide opportunities for the students with disabilities from her class to participate in inclusion. She stated that the curriculum content provided to her students was aligned to the common core standards and she didn't think there was a need to send the students into general education classes for inclusion. She also had high academic standards with a sophisticated system to earn rewards for academic achievement. The focus in her class was academic and did not include mastery in behavior or effort. The participant viewed the needs of the students in her class were met through the academic rigor provided to them.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of the research project are acknowledged in this section.

1. The reliability and validity of a naturalistic qualitative study may be limited because the occurrences of the activities and behaviors are difficult to replicate.

2. The targeted area of study “the Circle of Courage values” are affective attributes of human beings; therefore, a difficult area for research because they are concepts and unique to individuals and cultures.

3. The data collected from observations and interviews are often viewed as “acts” for the observer and not as the actual behavior exhibited on a daily basis, but the repeated observations helped minimize the “acting behaviors.” The interview responses can be expressed as philosophical ideologies and not from the heart of the participants but the number of questions asked in the interview helped to minimize the philosophical and ideological responses. The responses were captured regardless if they were philosophical or factual.

4. The timeline scheduled for the research was limited because additional data could have been collected over a semester or a school year.

5. The number of participants was limited because an increased number of participants could have given a better sense of the values being implemented in special education for Native American children with disabilities.

6. This study was limited to the American southwest region and generalization to other populations and regions of the nation is limited, and

7. The researcher may have been influenced by her status as a member of a Native American tribe.

Despite the limitations of the research the themes that emerged and the information gathered can contribute to Native American education practices to support educators, parents, and children who serve this population of students in implementing values in the classroom.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The special education teachers targeted mainstream values (e.g., moral values, social skills, and life skills) as integral to their curriculum and programs, because the values were most familiar to them. When I conducted the snapshot observations the Circle of Courage values integrated well with the values that were already being taught. The study revealed that teachers desired their students to become contributing members of their communities and to become independent and responsible citizens. Teachers taught the students appropriate responsible behaviors and helped build skills through use of targeted IEP goals, which increased or changed as each goal was achieved. The support and encouragement teachers provided to the Native American children with disabilities showed increase and improvement for students in skills development, achievement, and self-confidence.

The research revealed that special education teachers possessed and utilized affective methods and strategies to build trust and respectful behavior of Native American children with disabilities and those with intellectual disability. Another finding was that the special education teachers in this study love their work with children with disabilities which were portrayed in their attitudes and behaviors during interactions with their students.

### **Implications of Practice**

Educators of Native American children must embrace the affective qualities of the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging to support and encourage success of children into society and the educational systems.

Arguments for including Native American perspectives of life and values in education are not new; it is a concept strongly recommended by the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (1991). Although the recommendations included, health, government, and education, the area of educational practice discussed in this research was relative to Native American values. Another recommendation was from the Meriam Report (1928) that stated the most fundamental need in Indian education was a change in point of view by educators. If implemented by the educational institutions the recommendations would positively impact Native American children entering the American educational systems for the first time. The points of view of the dominant society and the Native American culture are multifaceted and complex. The Native American view of the world and their perception about the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is holistic. Nam et al. (2012) said “Indigenous views and TEK include a particular belief system about nature with unique epistemological and cultural views, ... language. These are integral to school experiences ...for American Indian students to bridge Western science worldviews with those of their community” (p. 145).

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) recommended comingling of the values between the dominant society and the indigenous people rather than trying to separate them due to the large cultural and linguistic diversities now present in our education systems.

Tippeconnic and Tippeconnic Fox (2012) also, supported the need “to include and view

AI cultures, languages, histories, and values as strengths in teaching and learning at all levels of education” (p. 841) that serve AI/AN students.

The special education teachers have implemented the recommendations consistent with Yazzie (1999), who stated, that “better learning occurs when teachers transform their educational practices and the curriculum that reflects the home culture from which the children come” (p. 87). Another argument by Tippeconnic quoted by Yazzie (1999) stated:

Affective qualities, rather than skills or academic preparation, seem to characterize effective teachers in the research literature. Studies indicate that teachers who serve Native students effectively are informal, are caring and warm, give up authority, and have and show respect for the students. (Yazzie, 1999, p. 95).

The middle and high school participants utilized warm and caring behaviors throughout the school day and were consistent with their use of positive reinforcements. The elementary participant advised other teachers of Native American students to give up authoritative and controlling attitudes because “teachers have to lead by example through quiet leadership and they have to realize that they can’t be with the students all the time to control the behaviors.” Although the middle and high school participants did not know about the Circle of Courage values they modeled affective behavior in building trust and respect with the students and the parents.

Cajete (1994) summarized indigenous epistemology as traditional education’s perception that all things are sacred, beginning “from the moment of conception to beyond the moment of death, was learning the true nature of one’s spirit (p. 43). The



ultimate goal that “the people” strive for throughout their life is “wisdom” discussed as the fifth dimension by Cajete (1994) as “to always think the highest thought” (p. 46). Cajete maintained “It is the place through which a sense of spiritual ecology develops, the center place of thought, the place of the deepest respect and sacredness, the place of good life, and the place of the Highest Thought” (49). Indigenous knowledge comes from the heart of individuals and controls the actions of individuals. The difference between the indigenous concept of knowledge and understanding and the mainstream society’s concept has resulted in conflict for indigenous children and youth in the education systems, where the push has been to compete and excel in textbook based knowledge (e.g., mathematics, reading, and writing). As pointed out by Vogt (1966), the Zuni and Navajo study participants showed harmony, balance, and equilibrium as the central values versus the Texan and Mormon participants who viewed success and virtue as their dominant values. The studies showed a presence of conflict of values the moment the Native American student entered the westernized education system. This conflict in knowledge attainment was one of the reasons for low academic achievement, high dropout rates, high absenteeism, and lack of motivation. According to Tippeconnic and Tippeconnic Fox (2012) “Cultural conflict can be the result for Indian students when values taught at the schools are ‘directly contrary to those (values) which are taught at home’ and can lead to confusion, frustration, and adjustment problems” (p. 842). (Brightman, 1974).

Implications for teacher preparation programs, professional development, and teacher mentorships are many. Evaluation of one’s values as recommended by Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) advocated for professionals to identify their own values, the values of

parents, and to acknowledge the differences. Rather than judging a parent's child rearing practices, the professionals are advised to understand the differences. Another critical area is to become familiar with policies that were developed to protect and strengthen the opportunities available to Native American children and children from multiethnic population groups. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) recommended including parents and families in the education process by utilizing their skills and knowledge as guest speakers in the classrooms to discuss their culture and values. Another recommendation is familiarity of the cultures represented in their classrooms (e.g., values, languages, sociocultural knowledge) that the children bring with them into the classrooms.

In Cleary and Peacock (1998) a non-Indian teacher advocated for educators to see the cultural differences between a Native American child's home and the school culture because it can cause confusion for the child. These cultural differences included, "time, values, world views, and ways of expression, learning, and aspects of being such as humor" (Cleary & Peacock, 1998, p. 7). The recommendation for comingling of the values to help our children and youth succeed in education is one that is supported by research from the past and present.

### **Implications for Policy Implementation**

The Executive Order 13592 (2011), The New Mexico Indian Education Act, and the K.10: The Indian Education Procedural Directive of the large urban school district in the southwest reflect opportunities and support of educational paths available for AI/AN children and youth in our educational institutions.

However, the design and implementation of these policies are complex and need the expertise of appropriate people to design and push for implementation of the policies.

Without the appropriate people they will remain stagnant from year to year as Native American children and youth continue to experience school dropout, academic failure, and misplacement into special education. The issue is not development of new policies but the issue is implementation of them in educational institutions across our nation where our children and youth are enrolled. People in decision making positions of management must be cognizant and knowledgeable of the federal, state, and local policies related to Indian Education. Tribal leaders, educational researchers, and Native American education professionals must be included in the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational policies that will positively impact our students' educational achievement and to change our story. Once successfully implemented, educational leaders in our academic institutions will begin to show data that reflect upward trends of our Native American students.

### **Future Research**

Future research related to Native American children with disabilities should include: (1) classroom interactions reflecting values of Native American children with disabilities, (2) increased research about Indigenous values and their place in educational institutions, and (3) research that defines values of cultures that are reflective of classroom and school enrollments.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In conclusion, the goal of maximizing educational opportunities for Native American families and children with disabilities and intellectual disability by weaving the Circle of Courage values with IDEA by three special education teachers from elementary, middle, and high school was studied.

The Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity and belonging were not equally addressed by two participants (elementary and middle). The high school participant addressed the four values with his students from the classroom, school, and into the community. The elementary participant focused primarily on the values of mastery and generosity and there was limited to no evidence of the values of independence and belonging supported beyond the classroom. The middle school participant focused on mastery, independence, and generosity with limited to no evidence of the value of belonging utilized by her students beyond the classroom.

The elementary participant's focus on academic achievement with the goal of attainment of a score of 80 percent and higher on classwork has a direct alignment to the value of mastery although she indicated that mastery did not include behavior or effort. Students behaviors during classwork demonstrated effort being put forth to complete assignments and aligned to the Samurai character and the Lobo mission. In addition there were minimal positive reinforcements utilized by the participant to support encouragement and motivation of students. The common core standards were implemented for the content subjects. The elementary participant indicated that it was one of the reasons the students remained in the special education classroom and did not participate in inclusionary programs in the school. Therefore there was limited to no evidence of the value of belonging practiced in the larger school and school population at the elementary school. Although the value of generosity was supported and encouraged by the elementary participant in the making of crafts for community groups and organizations the students did not participate in the giving of the gifts they made for the larger community. The value of independence was encouraged and supported minimally

through use of choice for student's participation in learning activities. Although I did not observe any students choosing one of the three waiting rooms during instruction the availability of this choice was shared during the one to one interview with the participant.

The middle school participant's support and encouragement of the value of belonging was minimal although she implemented reverse inclusion. This type of inclusion kept the students in their classroom with their peers and did not allow them to experience opportunities in general education with students their age. Although the participant designed opportunities for her students to eat lunch in the school cafeteria the students were still segregated from the larger school population majority of the time. The middle school participant planned the class field trips purposefully into the community but the trips were specific for her class and not with the greater school population. The values of mastery, independence, and generosity were encouraged and supported to a great extent by the middle school participant through multiple methods as discussed in the prior chapter.

The high school participant encouraged and supported the four Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging equally for students with disabilities in his class. The participant designed and implemented inclusionary programs in general education classes for the students in his class. The students experienced success in the classes. The participant instructed, mentored, advised, and then separated himself from direct involvement and monitored from a distance. He allowed the students to learn a skill and to try it out in real life to experience success. The majority of the support from the teacher for academic content, life skills, social skills, and moral values were directly related to real life situations.

Not all information and data gathered were applicable to the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging. There was one example, during the reading observation when the elementary participant stated that the reading program was “awful.” This statement showed that she had preferences of the curriculum she offered to her students. She shared that she felt the reading curriculum was awful because she felt it was boring and too scripted, and it did not allow for creativity. In addition the activity of reading and the content of the reading program did not demonstrate any of the Circle of Courage values. However, the teacher’s actions and interaction with the students during the reading instruction was utilized for the targeted study focus. The same was true for the observation snapshots of the science (middle school) and the math lessons (high school). The lesson content did not relate to the Circle of Courage values; however the teacher’s actions and interactions with their students were noted during the observations because those related to the values.

The layers of the values within the context of the classroom (students, teachers, and curriculum) and the schools differed. For example the students valued the friendship and communication they shared with their peers. The students showed respect to each other and provided assistance to their peers when they were asked by the teacher. However, they (students) did not voluntarily help each other unless they were asked to do so. When asked they did not hesitate to walk over to students who were struggling with their assignments and provided assistance. The hesitancy in helping voluntarily can be attributed to the teacher’s approval being sought. The students did not choose topics to learn or curriculum to use. Although the students came to school with their own values they learned the values that the teachers taught.

The teachers clearly had dominion in their classrooms. Lessons, peer helpers, behavior, and assistance were carried out as approved and initiated by the teachers. The values that were taught came from the teacher's realm of experiences and knowledge. The teachers selected the topics and values to teach. Often these came from information they were most familiar with and could implement with confidence. As teachers designed the programs within the schools they implemented inclusion or they decided to keep the students close with minimal interaction with the larger school population. Often teachers have a lot of control in the design of their programs in a school. As evidenced with the high school participant he valued volunteer work and community service in addition to full inclusion into general education classes. So he developed and designed his program based on his values. The elementary participant designed her program to not include inclusion because she knew the students had low reading and writing skills that would limit success in general education classes. The middle school participant designed her program to include reverse inclusion activities because she saw limited choices available at her school.

The schools conform to the values of the dominant society in their daily operation. They institute systems developed and accepted by all schools that include student behavior handbooks, policies, grades, tests, bell systems, and parent notifications. It is rare to find a school that differs from other schools in its operation systems. It is also difficult to make changes in a system that has always done things a certain way. Changes are minimal in these schools.

Educational curriculum is designed to reflect the values of the dominant society. The curriculums are usually adopted on a cycle set by each state departments of

education. A handful of teachers from a school district usually select the curriculum for their district based on favorable review by the group for the content area of study. Upon receipt of material for an adopted curriculum, the teachers are expected to implement them. Sometimes the curriculum adopted by a school district isn't favorable to everyone as evidenced by the elementary participant when she stated that the reading curriculum was "awful" and didn't want to use it during an observation. This showed conflicting values of the teacher with the reading curriculum adopted by the school district.

The study showed that the three special education teachers in elementary, middle, and high school targeted "values" as central to their curriculum design and program focus through multiple methods. These were reflected in their daily instructions, behavior, lesson plans, and interactions with students. Although the targeted values were labeled as moral values, social skills, life skills, responsibility, integrity, respect, independence and hard work, the research showed that "values" were taught and honored. The study revealed mainstream special education teachers are not familiar with and do not know about the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging. The finding supports the need to comingle the values of the Native Americans with mainstream society including others to benefit children with disabilities advocated by Castagno and Brayboy (2008).

As revealed in the study the Native American children with disabilities and intellectual disability thrived specifically in the middle school and high school classrooms. The affective characteristics of the teachers in middle and high schools helped build trust between both parties. The trust relationship enabled the students with intellectual disability to succeed, one with toileting and behavior and the high school



student to learn counting money and telling time. As the students achieved each goal, the teachers moved forward to the next goal.

The study revealed that the Native American children with intellectual disability and others were comfortable in the learning environments at the elementary, middle, and high school. The behavior of the students such as verbalized choices, asking questions, requesting help, and pushing themselves beyond their designated stop points in classwork demonstrated a sense of belonging by the students. Children with intellectual disability were observed teasing their teacher, asking questions, and experiencing success in life skills such as toileting and behavior, counting money, telling time, and drawing beautiful cartoon caricatures free hand. However, more work is needed to go beyond the student's classroom walls to instill a sense of belonging to the greater school and school population, which includes community. Another value that needs additional work is the value of independence primarily at the elementary level. The elementary and the middle school participants pointed out the issue of "learned helplessness" by students with disabilities which they attributed to hovering adults who did not allow the students to challenge themselves. The value of independence will address this issue because as students experience more and more success with the choices they make and are given more responsibilities their independence will be strengthened. Although the elementary participant pushed for academic achievement with high benchmarks at 80 percent and higher, the students accepted the challenge and worked hard. The elementary students were observed on task during instruction and completed their assignments as requested. In other words they were motivated to complete the work assigned and showed confidence in attaining achievement.

The teachers demonstrated behaviors of respect, inclusion, and acceptance towards their students, coworkers, other students, parents, family, and community organizations. The middle and high school participants gave reinforcement abundantly to the students in their classrooms. The action encouraged the students to achieve with confidence and felt successful in learning the tasks and skills presented to them.

The middle school participant involved the Native American parents into the educational design of the children. She implemented support of parents in behavior modification strategies of their children. She also discussed cultural concerns and sensitivity for appropriate planning of educational field trips and curriculum. The middle school teacher also visited the homes of each of her students rather than expecting parents to come to the school to see her. Not only did it strengthen her relationship with the parents but it minimized the perception of power often associated with education professionals. In addition, the action helped alleviate potential barriers often experienced by parents.

The high school participant involved parents and family through invitation letters at the beginning of the school year and thereafter weekly. He continually gave good reports about students through phone calls and texting, which he shared with the students. The results of the study have practical significance for educators of Native American children with disabilities and intellectual disability in daily classroom instruction and interaction. The professional practice of special education teachers showed that they designed their programs to meet the unique individual needs of the Native American children with disabilities to support further education, employment, and independent living. The support of the values was evidenced in the high school participant's

implementation of inclusion into general education courses for his students where the student's self-esteem and self-confidence levels were reinforced with successful experiences. The students were taught responsibility and independence by being able to ride the public transportation system to and from their designated work location. They were also able to find their work site within the large facility. This demonstrated that students with intellectual disability can achieve and experience success when they have independence and are equipped with the appropriate tools for success. The elementary and the middle school participants taught their students generosity through the 'giving' of crafts and gifts to others in their communities. The students learned the value of altruism by giving up parties and money so that others would benefit from their giving.

The special education participants showed pride in the work their children with disabilities produced by displaying student work in the classrooms and school hallways. The work displayed for others to see had positive comments from the teachers. The students did their best on the work they turned in because they knew it would be displayed.

The study showed that Native American children with disabilities and intellectual disability experienced mastery by saying, "I can succeed" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 137) in school-related studies including academics such as reading, writing, and mathematics. Life skills such as toileting and personal information were mastered. Other skills such as moral values including honor, respect, responsibility, hard work, and social skills for appropriate behavior were taught.

The study showed increased use of the value of independence where children with disabilities said "I have power to make decisions" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 138). To

design and implement a successful program the high school teacher utilized inclusionary practices. He equipped the students with tools for taking risks such as riding the public transportation system and doing volunteer work in a public institution. The teachers empowered the students through “choices” about things that mattered to them such as shopping independently and ordering their own meals in restaurants.

The value of generosity was taught by the teachers which allowed children with disabilities to say “I have a purpose for my life” (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 138). Activities that supported generosity included giving of food baskets, sharing talents, clothing banks, volunteer work, developing skills, and donating money towards projects. Community organizations such as hospitals, veterans, parishes, and homeless shelters received help from children with disabilities with altruistic values.

The increased use of the value of belonging allowed the children to say, “I am loved” (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 137). Teachers built a sense of belonging through positive reinforcements such as verbal, physical, rewards, group logos, class mission statements, group huddles, group celebrations, and home visits. However, more work is needed by special education teachers to design and implement programs that go beyond the classroom for children with disabilities to enhance the value of belonging. This would include increased inclusionary practice into the greater school and school population and the greater community. One of the ways would be through participation in field trips and travel with general education students rather than just the peers in special education.

As educators embrace and operationalize the concept of values and its place in educational institutions related to Native American children with and without disabilities the gaps in achievement, attendance, and graduation rates will begin to decrease. As

shown by the special education teachers in the study, the benefits will improve education in and outside of school buildings for Native American students with and without disabilities. The benefits include increased partnerships with parents and families, increased outreach and service to communities as contributing members, increased respect, and increased motivation by students to come to school and take greater pride in educational work.

There is still work needed to support Native American children with disabilities with use of appropriate evaluation tools to diagnose for special education; increasing academic achievement; and decreasing dropout rates; the results of this study will help educators realize that ‘values’ has a place in educational institutions that serve Native American children.

Through the teachers’ demonstration of support and encouragement of the Circle of Courage values of mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging Sa’a naghái bik’e hózhóon was experienced by the children with disabilities within the classroom by the students in elementary and middle school. The high school students experienced the Circle of Courage values on an increased level. The experience included being complete, being whole, having harmony, balance, happiness, love, and inner peace (Thayer-Bacon, 2002; Farella, 1984; & Emerson 2003).

### **The Navajo Blessing Way Prayer**

In beauty may I walk.

All day long may I walk.

Through the returning seasons may I walk.

On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.

With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk.

With dew about my feet may I walk.

With beauty may I walk.

With beauty before me, may I walk.

With beauty behind me, may I walk.

With beauty above me, may I walk.

With beauty below me, may I walk.

With beauty all around me, may I walk.

In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.

In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.

It is finished in beauty.

It is finished in beauty.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



DATE:

INTERVIEWER:

TEACHER:

SCHOOL:

CLASSROOM:

1. Tell me about your experiences with Native American students.
2. Do you know about the Circle of Courage? (If yes, can you explain what it means to you and your teaching?)
3. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “mastery” as it relates to students in your class. (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address mastery in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate mastery?)
4. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “belonging” as it relates to students in your class. (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address belonging in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate belonging?)
5. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “generosity” as it relates to students in your class. (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address generosity in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate generosity?)
6. What do you understand by (or how would you define/characterize) the term “independence” as it relates to students in your class. (Possible follow up-Can you give me an example of how you address independence in your teaching and/or how do students demonstrate independence?)
7. What advice would you give to another teacher who has Native American students in their classroom?

**APPENDIX B**

**LETTER TO TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS**

Daisy Thompson  
501 Apache Court  
Gallup, NM 87301  
Telephone (505) 362-7935  
E-mail: dthompso@unm.edu

October 2, 2013

Name  
Address  
City/State/Zip

Dear (Personalized):

I am writing this letter to introduce myself and to notify you of some observations that I will be conducting for a research study I am conducting under the direction of Ruth Luckasson, J.D., University of New Mexico.

I plan to be in your school/ classroom from October, 2013 through the end of the semester in January, 2013. I will come to your school/ classroom biweekly to observe for 30 minutes to an hour for a total of four observation days for a total of 2-4 hours during the 9 weeks. I will come back in December to complete the one to one interviews and the exit meeting in January, 2014 with you and your building principal.

My name is Daisy Thompson and been employed by the Albuquerque Public Schools for eight years as the director of Indian Education. Prior to coming to APS I worked for the University of New Mexico as a professional developer with education staff across the Navajo Nation in 166 schools. I have more than 30 years of experience as a teacher and a school administrator in all fields of education. However, my purpose for visiting and observing in your school/classroom isn't related to my employment or my current role, I am coming as a graduate student. I am working on my dissertation for a doctorate in special education.

The specific topic that I am researching is the Native American values of Mastery, Belonging, Independence, and Generosity, which are also known by the names of Circle of Courage and or the Native American Medicine Wheel. I will be observing you/r special education teacher and will be looking to answer the following questions:

- (1) Are urban special education teachers familiar with the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?
- (2) How do urban special education teachers support and encourage [or not] the expression of the Circle of Courage values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence of urban school aged Native American students in school? And
- (3) How do special education teachers operationalize the values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence?

I look forward to meeting you in next few weeks. I am happy to provide additional information as you may need. I can be contacted at cellular phone number: 505-362-7935 and email at: [dthomps@unm.edu](mailto:dthomps@unm.edu) and or Thompson\_dai@aps.edu.

Sincerely,

Daisy Thompson

**APPENDIX C**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE CHARACTERISTICS FOR MASTERY**

Unconsolidated Mastery Values	Consolidated Mastery Values
1. The need to feel and experience success.	1. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 137).
2. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed."	2. The "desires to have "others" see them as able and capable" Bogdan (1980); Edgerton (1993); Rock (1988).
3. The desire to have "others" see them as able and capable.	3. Achievement is expected from self and others (Rao, 2006).
4. Persistence and a sense of self-efficacy are components of mastery.	4. The support and guidance that children and youth receive and accept from persons whom they value (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54).
5. Others to expect achievement from them.	
6. The attributes come from support and guidance that children receive and accept from a person whom they value.	5. Persistence and a sense of self-efficacy. (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54), Forthun and McCombie (2007) and Kress (2003).

**APPENDIX D**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE CHARACTERISTICS FOR INDEPENDENCE**

Unconsolidated Independence Values	Consolidated Independence Values
1. Empowerment to be in control of their behavior and decisions.	1. Empowerment and decision-making manifest increased independence.
2. Participation in one's community teaches responsibility and strengthens the concept that it is important to the people.	2. Encouragement from adult role models guide with respect and teaching of values instill independence (Brokenleg, 2005).
3. Feelings of joy when choices are given.	3. Choices give feelings of joy and a sense
4. Self-determination.	of responsibility (Rock, 1988).
5. The spirit of independence is free will cultivated by responsibility so that the child can say "I have the power to make decisions" (p. 138) Brendtro et al. (1990).	4. Participation in community is important and it is "where the 'forming of the heart and face' is most fully expressed" Cajete (2000, p. 86) and Rao (2006).
6. Balanced choices,	
7. Community is where the heart and face is most fully expressed,	5. Behaviors of self-determination, risk-
8. Risk taking,	taking, and self-control are built on trust
9. Privacy and decision making,	and privacy including organization and
10. Organization and control, and	routines (Rock, 1988).
11. Encouragement.	



**APPENDIX E**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE CHARACTERISTICS FOR GENEROSITY**

Unconsolidated Generosity Values	Consolidated Generosity Values
1. The need to have a purpose in life.	1. Giving to others multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things (Gilgun, 2004, p. 55).
2. To share learning with others	
3. Promotion of well-being to family and community members.	
4. To feel needed.	2. Promotion of well-being to family and community members (Begay et al., 1999).
5. To have a goal.	
6. Support	3. To share learning with others.
7. To have a purpose, and	
8. Giving to others in multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things (Gilgun, 2004, p. 55).	4. To feel needed and have purpose (Brendtro et al., 1990).
	5. To have a goal (Brendtro et al., 1990).

**APPENDIX F**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE CHARACTERISTICS FOR BELONGING**

Unconsolidated Belonging Values	Consolidated Belonging Values
1. Relationship with (people, animals, plants, and spirits) is the cornerstone of tribal community.	1. To feel acceptance through cultivation of relationships built on trust (Brendtro et al., 1990).
2. Gives meaning and substance to human lives and fosters a sense of continuity and identity.	2. Acknowledgement of presence through greetings, being included and invited (Brendtro et al., 1990).
3. To be included and invited.	3. Establish a sense of identity for increased respect, advocacy, confidence and self-esteem to foster, meaning and substance.
4. Cultivated by relationships of trust.	4. Connection to one's environment and community with a sense of, "We are all related" relationship with people, animals, plants, and spirits and kinship with all life (Cajete, 1994, p. 165).
5. Acknowledgment of presence.	5. Recognition and appreciation of one's skills, talents, and abilities to empower. (Malone, 2007; Boldt & Brooks, 2006; Herman, 2008; Larson, 2006).
6. Greeting and validation of others.	11. Increased self-esteem to self-advocacy for greater awareness of identity.
7. Establishing of identity.	12. To give and receive emotional support.
8. To make connections.	
9. Recognition of abilities and empowerment.	
10. Through community one comes to know what it is like to be related by everyday acts (e.g., songs, dance, story, art, shared feelings and celebrations).	

Appendix F Circle of Courage Characteristics for Belonging (Continued)

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**Unconsolidated Belonging Values**

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13. Show of appreciation of one's talents  
and skills.
  14. We are related and have a sense of  
kinship with all life.
  15. Connection to one's community.
  16. Self-concept builds respect and self-  
Esteem.
  17. To feel acceptance.
  18. The need to be loved and to belong.
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**APPENDIX G**

**ARTIFACTS FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

## **Artifacts from Elementary**

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Child Friendly Standards,	Writing Work Table,
Courage Poster,	Lamp and Table,
Participant's Desk,	Goals for Reading and Math,
Student Posters,	What Is A Hero?
Work Submittal Baskets,	Samurai Code and Sea Stars,
Work Area,	Sentences,
Samurai Work Schedule,	Hand Art with Whale,
Classroom (NE) and (SE),	Writing Samples,
Value Statements,	Daily Jobs,
Work (Scripts).	Learning Cubicle.

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**APPENDIX H**  
**ARTIFACTS FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL**



## **Artifacts from Middle School**

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Communication Words,	Hallway Display,
Circle Time (Good Morning Today is...),	Wall for Backpacks, Agendas, and Recipes,
Class Assignments,	Daily Activities,
Kitchenette,	Lesson Plan (10/28/2013),
Nine Classroom Rules,	Computer Area,
Life Size Drawings,	Art Work and Stories,
Lesson Plans on Washing Tables and	Lesson Plans on Speaking, Listening,
Sweeping.	Writing, and Reading (10/22/2013).

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**APPENDIX I**  
**ARTIFACTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL**

### Artifacts from High School

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Lesson Plans on Coin Values,	Writing Webbing (e.g., Main Idea),
Letters to Parents,	Student Work (e.g., Addition, Place Value,
Go Hornets,	Poster: Feeling Words,
Writing (e.g., When We Get Mad),	Lesson Plan “Problem Solved”
The assignments were completed with	Writing Samples (e.g., Halloween, I am a
student’s verbal input,	Good Person, and Going Fishing),
Lesson Plan: Problem Solved,	Writing Webbing (e.g., “Main Idea”),
Earning Computer Time,	Letters Home,
Lesson Plan: I am a Good Person,	Personal Inventory, and
Earning Computer Time, and	Art Work.
Addition and Place Value.	

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**APPENDIX J**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

## Circle of Courage in Elementary School

Mastery	Elementary School Data
1. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 137).	"Our goal was very critical to us which is to be able to function in society by being able to perform math, writing, and reading skills."
2. The "desires to have "others" see them as able and capable" Bogdan (1980); Edgerton (1993); Rock (1988).	An "I Can" a can with eyes glued on it was on a table. Student exemplars were posted in the classroom.
3. Achievement was expected from self and others (Rao, 2006).	Mastery was being able to obtain scores of 80-100 percent, indicating achievement of skills that the students had received instruction in using the academic standards.
4. The support and guidance children and youth receive and accept from persons whom they value (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54).	The verbal praises included "I like the way you... You are amazing. Look at that it is impressive."
5. Persistence and a sense of self-efficacy (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54), Forthun and McCombie (2007) and Kress (2003).	Students were taken on educational field trips to build navigation skills, riding the city bus, points of references, and increased communication skills.

Appendix J: Circle of Courage in Elementary School (Continued)

<b>Independence</b>	<b>Elementary School Data</b>
<p>1. Empowerment and decision-making manifest increased independence.</p>	<p>Self-advocacy skills and responsibility were taught (e.g., when in uncomfortable situations, students used a strong voice “Stop, I don’t like it when you…”).</p>
<p>2. Encouragement and reinforcement from role models guided with respect and teaching of values instill independence (Brokenleg, 2005).</p>	<p>Posters in the classroom depicted (1) Courage to stand up and speak, and to sit down and listen, (2) Student made posters about honor, courtesy, honesty, justice, loyalty, and duty, and (3) What is a hero?</p>
<p>3. Choices give feelings of joy and a sense of responsibility (Rock, 1988).</p>	<p>Choices were given for building responsibility, dignity, making good decisions for accountability.</p> <p>Methods utilized to allow student choices included waiting rooms, safe spaces, and help wanted signs.</p>
<p>4. Participation in community is important and it “is the place where the ‘forming of the heart and face’ is most fully expressed (Cajete, 2000, p. 86); Rao (2006).</p>	<p>“Listen to the students and hear what they are saying to us.” Students are given a chance to “fix” their mistakes and were challenged to take risks in tasks because the participant knew they are in their safe zones, the classroom.</p>

Appendix J Circle of Courage in Elementary School (Continued)

<b>Independence</b>	<b>Elementary School Data</b>
<p>5. Behaviors of self-determination, risk-taking, and self-control are built on trust and privacy including organization and routines (Rock, 1988).</p>	<p>The teacher discussed <i>Being Brave</i> which meant doing something even if you were scared, wrong, on your own, felt dumb, teased and challenged by your friends.</p>
<b>Generosity</b>	<b>Elementary School Data</b>
<p>1. Giving to others in multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things (Gilgun, 2004, p. 55).</p>	<p>Generosity showed in the projects the students generated and in the kindness they showed in giving of their mature qualities such as emotions and awareness and their guidance.</p>
<p>2. Promotion of well-being to family and community members (Begay et al., 1999).</p>	<p>The class was involved with community outreach to the Veteran’s Hospital, other hospitals, parishes and churches, the homeless and terminally ill patients.</p>
<p>3. To share learning with others.</p>	<p>Peer helpers were encouraged to look around and help those who needed help. A student gave up his protractor to another student to allow her to finish first although it delayed him in completing his work.</p>

Appendix J: Circle of Courage in Elementary School (Continued)

4. To feel needed and have purpose (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Teamwork was shown in the collaborative artwork and projects the students created to give to community organizations and people.
5. To have a goal (Brendtro et al., 1990).	The students made cards, flag, place mats, wreaths, breads, Ojos, and door napkins and gave to community.

<b>Belonging</b>	<b>Elementary School Data</b>
1. To feel accepted through cultivation of relationships built on trust (Brendtro et al., 1990).	A large poster of a whale with little fish was posted on the wall entitled <i>We are fierce learners</i> . Student names were written on traced hands of students.
2. Validation and acknowledgement of presence through greetings, being included and invited (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Belonging was being part of a larger group and doing things together, sticking close, being equal, and protecting each other.
3. Establishing a sense of identity for increased self-esteem, respect, self-advocacy, and self-confidence to foster continuity, meaning, and substance. Brendtro et al. (1990); Beart et al. (2004); Gilgun (2004).	The class had a sense of identity, through a team name-The Samurais, team vision-Lobo vision. Aligned to the Samurai character of honor, loyalty, and daily recital of the vision and mission. Knowing identity, and to not take “no.”



Appendix J: Circle of Courage in Elementary School (Continued)

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|---|--|
| 4. Connection to one's environment and community with a sense of; "We are all related" relationship with people, animals, plants, and spirits and kinship with all life (Cajete, 1994, p. 165). | The class had a sense of belonging through group huddles, celebration of special events together, traveling together, and treating others as equals. |
| 5. Recognition and appreciation of one's talents, abilities, and skills for empowerment. Malone (2007); Boldt and Brooks (2006); Herman (2008); and Larson (2006).                              | Student work was displayed depicting belonging and talents of students.  |
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**APPENDIX K**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

<b>Mastery</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>1. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, “I can succeed” (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.137).</p>	<p>Mastery is being able to demonstrate understanding and knowledge under pressure. Expectations for success: (1) What do you see here? (2) What do these look like to you? (3) How did you do this? (4) What is that word?</p>
<p>2. The desires to have “others” see them as able and capable. Bogdan (1980); Edgerton (1993); Rock (1988).</p>	<p>Participant was observed teaching (1) reading, math, science, writing, and social studies (2) students retold a field trip, to know their personal information: name, address, phone, and parent’s names, and (3) displayed student work in the classroom and hallway.</p>
<p>3. Achievement is expected from self and others (Rao, 2006).</p>	<p>Mastery was taught by repetition and modeling. Other teachers were advised to know why specific concepts were taught. Mastery was shown by students who experienced success and praise. Rewards included prizes, happy meals, and lunch.</p>

Appendix K: Circle of Courage in Middle School (Continued)

<b>Mastery</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>4. The support and guidance children and youth receive and accept from persons they value (Gilgun, 2004, p.54).</p>	<p>Teacher showed support of her students through verbal praises and knowing students and parents. She advised teachers about Native American characteristics: special, peaceful, loving, and happy.</p>
<p>5. Persistence and a sense of self-efficacy (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54), Forthun and McCombie (2007) and Kress (2003).</p>	<p>The participant empowered the student's self-efficacy by setting expectations of being the best people they could be and that society expected all to be self-sufficient and to act appropriately.</p>
<b>Independence</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>1. Empowerment and decision-making manifest increased independence.</p>	<p>Independence is being able to do something on your own (e.g., toileting). Participant empowered students by appointing them as "leader for the day" and they made their own decisions for the Morning Circle activity.</p>
<p>2. Encouragement and reinforcement from adult role models that guide with respect and the teaching of values instill independence (Brokenleg, 2005).</p>	<p>Participant stressed, "Show you care! At home and at school, care about what they like, care about them, and give lots of encouragement and praise daily."</p>

Appendix K: Circle of Courage in Middle School (Continued)

<b>Independence</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>3. Feelings of joy when choices are given and a sense of responsibility (Rock (1988).</p>	<p>Participant gave choices (1) Flex sequencing of lessons, (2) allowed students to continue past the designated stopping point, and (3) leaders had choice of sequence and strategy for Morning Circle.</p>
<p>4. Participation in community is important and it “is the place where the ‘forming of the heart and face’ is most fully expressed” (Cajete, 2000, p. 86).</p>	<p>Teacher encouraged community activities: (1) conducting home visits, (2) supporting parents with behavior issues, (3) giving each the responsibility of retelling their field trip experience and (4) ordering food and shopping independently.</p>
<p>5. Behaviors of self-determination, risk-taking, and self-control are built on trust and privacy including organization and routines (Rock, 1988).</p>	<p>Participant built trust and privacy for each student: (1) being approachable, (2) using a soft voice, (3) being real with issues and faults, (4) use of humor (e.g., teasing), and (5) using hand and head signals (e.g., thumbs up or down, nodding yes or no, and talking outside the classroom).</p>

Appendix K: Circle of Courage in Middle School (Continued)

<b>Generosity</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
1. Giving to others in multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things (Gilgun, 2004, p. 55).	Generosity means giving, being nice and getting along with others and giving money for food baskets.
2. Promotion of well-being to family and community members (Begay et al., 1999).	Participant taught and modeled sharing of feelings, giving praise, and invited parents to share their cultural issues and concerns.
3. To share learning with others.	Participant promoted peer helpers: (1) fifth grade general education students came in to help the students and the children with disabilities were encouraged to help each other.
4. To feel needed and have purpose (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Participant took students shopping for others, gave immediate attention to the hurts and illnesses, laundry was provided for students, and took phone calls from other service providers; bus drivers, therapists, parents, specialists, to coordinate services for the students.

Appendix K: Circle of Courage in Middle School (Continued)

<b>Generosity</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>5. To have a goal (Brendtro et al., 1990).</p>	<p>The students were instructed to say: Thank you and please daily. As goals were developed with students it had a specific beginning and ending point. There were rewards given for achieving the goals. Students were taught to be generous.</p>
<b>Belonging</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>1. To feel accepted through relationships built on trust (Brendtro et al., 1990).</p> <p>2. Validation and acknowledgement of presence through greetings, being included and invited (Brendtro et al., 1990).</p> <p>3. Establishing a sense of identity for increased self-esteem, respect, self-advocacy, and self-confidence to foster continuity, meaning, and substance. Brendtro et al. (1990); Beart et al. (2004); Gilgun (2004).</p>	<p>Belonging is being accepted, trusted, and welcomed in the school, home, and society.</p> <p>Participant greeted and introduced people throughout the research period (e.g., adults, parents, teachers, administrators, and students).</p> <p>Participant's goal was to (1) know each parent and student personally, (2) work on attendance improvement of students, (3) inclusion into general education was promoted but limited due to the lack of electives, and (4) the bilingualism of students was honored in class work.</p>

Appendix K: Circle of Courage in Middle School (Continued)

<b>Belonging</b>	<b>Middle School Data</b>
<p>4. Connection to one’s environment and community with a sense of “We are all related,” relationship with people, animals, plants, and spirits and kinship with all life (Cajete, 1994, p. 165).</p>	<p>Belonging was enhanced with (1) reverse inclusion with teachers, students, and administrators requested to invite the class to attend presentations in the other classrooms and to come into the classroom and read to the students. The cafeteria was used for lunch. Purposeful trips were planned throughout the year.</p>
<p>5. Recognition and appreciation of one’s talents, abilities, and skills for empowerment. Malone (2007); Boldt and Brooks (2006); Herman (2008); Larson (2006).</p>	<p>Recognized individual skills: “Where is ____, he just learned to whistle today?” “You guys are smarter than the average bear, nice, nice!” “It is curtains for you and curtains for you next time,” and “How come you guys are so awesome?”</p>



**APPENDIX L**

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL**

<b>Mastery</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
<p>1. The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, "I can succeed" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.137).</p>	<p>Mastery was being able to do one's best and to keep building on the learned skills by improvement and progress. Mastery is feeling successful and confident.</p>
<p>2. The "desire to have "others" see them as able and capable" Bogdan (1980); Edgerton (1993); Rock (1988).</p>	<p>Students' exemplars were evidenced throughout the observation period. The participant read and wrote notes on each paper handed in by the students. The students were instructed to see "good" in themselves and were assigned to write about, <i>What I am good at</i>.</p>
<p>3. Achievement is expected of self and others (Rao, 2006).</p>	<p>Mastery was taught by collaborative work utilizing small increments for success. Peer helpers were encouraged.</p>
<p>4. The support and guidance children and youth receive and accept from persons whom they value (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54).</p>	<p>Participant modeled and guided with examples of himself in assignments, used real money to teach concepts, and notified family members when students were doing well and gave positive reinforcements (e.g., verbal, physical, and familial).</p>

Appendix J: Circle of Courage in High School (Continued)

<b>Mastery</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
<p>5. Persistence and a sense of self-efficacy (Gilgun, 2004, p. 54), Forthun and McCombie (2007).</p>	<p>A poster of a happy hornet with a message of being a life-long learner and making contributions to others.</p>
<b>Independence</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
<p>1. Empowerment and decision-making manifest increased independence.</p>	<p>Participant advocated the need to instruct, model, and guide from a distance.</p>
	<p>Independence was being able to do something on one's own at a given time.</p>
<p>2. Encouragement and reinforcement from adult role models that guide with respect and the teaching of values instill independence (Brokenleg, 2005).</p>	<p>Students were assigned to write about, <i>People Who Are Special in My Life</i>" and how they were impacted. The teacher told the students, "All of us make bad choices in our lives, but it doesn't mean we are bad people."</p>
<p>3. Choices give feelings of joy and a sense of responsibility (Rock, 1988).</p>	<p>Independence was taught by allowing students to practice learned concepts, and establishing routines, providing directions, and setting expectations.</p>

Appendix J: Circle of Courage in High School (Continued)

<b>Independence</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
<p>4. Participation in community is important and it “is the place where the ‘forming of the heart and face’ ... is most fully expressed” (Cajete, 2000, p. 86).</p>	<p>Volunteer work and inclusion were evidenced in (1) hospital work; cleaning the cafeteria, stocking the gift shop, sorting mail, and (2) inclusion in DECA, swimming, English, history, teen sports, and Spanish. Most of the students experienced success in these areas.</p>
<p>5. Behaviors of self-determination, risk-taking, and self-control are built on trust and privacy including organization and routines (Rock, 1988).</p>	<p>Students learned their assigned tasks sequence and routines: through finding the work locations in the hospital and within the city, learning to ride the city bus, purchasing bus passes, inserting the ticket appropriately, and pulling the rope to stop the bus at the correct bus stops.</p>
<b>Generosity</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
<p>1. Giving to others in multiple ways: time, attention, caring, recognition, affirmation, and material things (Gilgun, 2004, p. 55).</p>	<p>Generosity was giving from the heart and showing empathy for others.</p>
<p>2. Promotion of well-being to family and community members (Begay et al., 1999).</p>	<p>Student involved in lessons on wellness, mental, social, and physical; talked about feelings, emotions, behavior and respect.</p>

Appendix J: Circle of Courage in High School (Continued)

<b>Generosity</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
3. To share learning with others.	Peer helpers were encouraged to assist others during math activities (e.g., counting money); student exemplars posted in the room.
4. To feel needed and have purpose (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Participant coordinated services, provided collaborative work with the students daily, gave immediate one to one assistance, and involved in coaching life skills by walking and talking with the students.
5. To have a goal (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Participant provided lesson plans with targeted goals during each observation period. Students were given opportunities to provide input about inclusion for other students.
<b>Belonging</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
1. To feel acceptance through relationships built on trust (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Belonging to a community, school or family.
2. Validation and acknowledgement of presence through greetings, being included and invited (Brendtro et al., 1990).	Participant and students demonstrated belonging by greetings and acknowledging visitors into their classroom, and telling classmates they were missed when absent.

Appendix J: Circle of Courage in High School (Continued)

<b>Belonging</b>	<b>High School Data</b>
<p>3. Establishing a sense of identity for increased self-esteem, respect, self-advocacy, and self-confidence to foster continuity, meaning, and substance.</p> <p>Brendtro et al. (1990); Beart et al. (2004); and Gilgun (2004).</p>	<p>Participant informed students that they needed to be a part of somebody and something, instead of just being alone.</p>
<p>4. Connection to one’s environment and community with a sense of “We are all related,” relationship with people, animals, plants, and spirits and kinship with all life (Cajete, 1994, p. 165).</p>	<p>Students demonstrated their connection by being together in many settings (e.g., classroom, walks, lunch, computer, and DECA), and recognizing each other’s skills and talents.</p>
<p>5. Recognition and appreciation of one’s talents, abilities, and skills for empowerment. Malone (2007); Boldt and Brooks (2006); Herman (2008); and Larson (2006).</p>	<p>There was appreciation and recognition extended to the students daily. There were 74 praises given in four observations (e.g., Excellent! Good job! Wow! You all have talents!).</p>

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