Indian Education Advocate

Andrew Conseen Duff has served on the APS-Indian Parent and Education Committees for the past 4 years. During this time he worked tirelessly advocating for the 6000 American Indian children from over 100 tribes that are students in the Albuquerque Public School system including two of his own with the last one graduating this year. He has worked with the Indian Parent Committee to advocate strength in the programs within the school district and to serve in several capacities including; APS Superintendent's Community Council on Equity (SCCE), presenter at national and local events for education including the National Johnson O'Malley Association and the National Indian Education Association. Andrew's past experiences leading in science, technology, engineering and math brought new awareness of APS students to the National American Indian Science and Engineering Fair and other career and higher education opportunities. He has presented to schools, programs and leadership at all levels including national events always bringing the knowledge and experiences home to his peers on the Parent and Education Committees. He served as the Local Planning Committee lead for the Student Strand and the STEM strand at the 2011 NIEA National Conference and was always looking for ways for our students and educators to be recognized for their outstanding work in APS. Andrew says of his experiences: “I have worked in National, State and Local educational efforts and have found that the APS-Indian Education is one of the most diligent, advanced and strong leaders of Indian Education in the U.S.” We have a diverse population and our Indian Education provides inclusion as one of the foundations for planning and delivering programs to our Native students. It has been an honor to serve on behalf of our parents and advocate for our students to preserve our educational sovereignty within this large school district. I will miss working with my colleagues on a monthly basis and listening to the student presentations. Andrew is a Parent -at-large member of the APS Indian Parent and Education Committee and a Citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, he resides in the APS District with his wife as they continue to support their three daughters achieving their higher education at the University of New Mexico.

Holiday Joy

During the month of December, the Indian Education Department helped 25 students who were in need of some Christmas cheer. Toys, food boxes, coats, hats, gloves, books and gift cards were donated by staff members, the students at Susie Rayos Marmon elementary and the 10202 Girl Scout troop from Our Lady of Assumption school. The items were collected throughout the month of December, and were delivered on December 22, 2012 to families from the Albuquerque area. It gave us the greatest joy to see so many happy faces when they were surprised by Santa's helpers from IED three days before Christmas. On behalf of the 25 students we send a A big thank you for the donations and for helping bring these students joy during the Holiday season.
At Comanche Elementary School, Ms. Looney’s 5th grade class is learning geometry through hands-on activities using different geometric shapes. These activities—"Alike and Different," “Guess My Rule,” and “Guess My Shape”—teach the students to see the differences and similarities among regular and irregular polygons. “Alike and Different” provides an opportunity for children to select a shape from a box of shapes and discuss how their shape is alike and different from another shape. The next activity, “Guess My Rule,” advances students thinking to how they can group different shapes based on common attributes. One student creates two groups of shapes and then classmates guess the rule of their groups. The final activity, “Guess My Shape,” builds on the previous skills and applies them in one activity.

For this article, most of the students discussed “Guess My Shape.” In this activity, a pair of students selects a shape to keep secret from their classmates. Their classmates, in turn, guess the geometric characteristics of the secret shape. Based on their questions, students rule out possible shapes until they correctly identify the mystery shape. This activity helps students to see that many shapes share attributes, thus building their understanding of categories and subcategories of two-dimensional figures.

Ms. Looney recently learned these activities at the Carnegie Geometric Thinking Academy sponsored by APS Indian Education professional development. She decided to use these geometry activities with the students because their recent DBA and STAR math assessments indicated a majority of the students needed support in this area. Additionally, these activities lay the foundation to achieve the 5th grade Common Core State Standards for geometry state that students must “understand that attributes belonging to a category of two-dimensional figures also belong to all subcategories of that category” and that the students can “classify two-dimensional figures in a hierarchy based on properties.”

Niah Walker liked the “Guess My Rule” activity “because you can guess what the rules are to make the groups of shapes instead of guessing random things.”

Morgan Largo liked “Guess My Shape” because “you get to guess the shape that the classmate who is leading the activity is hiding. If your guess isn’t right, you guess again until you guess the right shape. I also learned the difference between a regular polygon and an irregular polygon. A regular polygon is a shape with a name like square, triangle, rectangle, and trapezoid. An irregular polygon is a shape that does not have a name.”

“You can guess attributes of the mystery shape and two classmates try to keep the secret of the shape. It was fun and it made math fun for me and it made me want to learn more about math and geometry” explained Nakiyal Denetdale. She and Niah Walker also learned the difference between concave and convex shapes, saying that they remember that concave shapes have a side that dips in like a cave.

Niah Walker captured her classmates’ opinion of the activities, “Working in groups for the activities make math fun.”
Congratulations! To three budding scientists during the school’s annual Science Fair.

1. Cheryl Shorty (Dine): First grader, 1st place: Volcanoes
2. Dominic Garcia (Acoma): Second grader, 2nd place: Tornadoes
3. Rai Willie (Dine), First grader, 3rd place: Speed of Roadrunners

Good Job! Keep up the good work!

The Ohiyesa after school program is focusing on math and cultural activities. Mrs. Forester and Mr. Montague are helping students with math activities around symmetry and estimation. The students have really enjoyed the estimation activity. They worked in teams to design a boat made out of aluminum foil and then estimate how many pinto beans it could hold before it sank. One team constructed a boat that held 906 pinto beans. The cultural activities have included working with fired ceramic clay and decorating the pieces with Native designs. The students have also enjoyed the string games with the students teaching other students how to make different patterns with the string.

The Indian Education resource classes continues to focus on phonemic awareness for: Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades. Third, fourth and fifth grades are focusing on comprehension, vocabulary development, and Native American values through the reading of Native American stories and books. Vocabulary development is also enhanced for grades 1-5, with the English in a Flash interactive computer program, which the students really seem to like. Wednesday’s are dedicated to cultural activities related to the Native American values of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence. Currently the students are studying about the importance of traditional foods. Friday’s are dedicated to math activities to help students become more successful in their math endeavors.

As you can see we are very busy here at Painted Sky Elementary School. Feel free to come by and visit us. The Indian Education Resource Room is located in Portable 31 on the very northeast corner of the Painted Sky campus.

Pat Montague,
Indian Education Resource Teacher

Happenings at Painted Sky ES

Students attending Indian Education classes at Chelwood have been working extremely hard to set goals for themselves and master them! Each group of Kindergarteners through fifth graders sets out to learn Common Core Standards on the APS scope and sequence that correlate with concepts that still need to be mastered (based on test scores). Along the way, progress in those standards is graphed so students can easily see where we can improve and what we can celebrate! Students have been making amazing progress, making academic goals and dreams come true!

Then it is time to move on to the next standards, make new dreams, and master them, too! Students are working their way to proficiency while focusing on the Native Values of Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.

This nine weeks, students are reading Native literature with a theme of generosity. So far, classes have enjoyed reading The Chief’s Blanket by Michael Chanin, Dragonfly’s Tale by Kristina Rodanas, and Mother Earth by Nancy Luenn. Our students are showing generosity to each other, to teachers, and to the Earth!
Poor graduation rates for students in APS have been a concern for many years. High School students do not automatically pass to the next grade just because they spend time in class. Students must earn a specific number of credits in a specific number of classes (e.g. 4 math credits, 4 English credits, etc.) to graduate. When a student receives an “F” for a semester grade, they do not earn that credit and must re-take the class.

Moving from middle school to high school can be a difficult transition. While the average student will earn 7 credits by passing all classes, many freshmen earn 5 or fewer credits; they fall behind in the first semester, or many of their early semesters. Often, they cannot earn enough “make-up” credits through summer classes or evening school to catch up with their classmates. It is possible to be a “third year freshman”.

One option for credit recovery is an on-line, self-paced set of classes known as GradPoint. (formerly NovaNet). APS has a limited number of licenses for students across the whole district. For students on the Tohajiilee Reservation, credit recovery is even more difficult because of the distance from school and the lack of computer access at home. The Indian Education Department (IED) is piloting a GradPoint recovery program that is delivered IN Tohajiilee, at the new, NMSU computer lab, right next to the Chapter House.

Tohajiilee students can ride the bus home from school, and then go to the lab in their community to work on credit recovery. Dan “Fergie” Ferguson is the IED Resource Teacher at West Mesa High School; he travels to Tohajiilee twice a week to administer the GradPoint classes, and assist or tutor in the content areas. Students may do some of the GradPoint modules on the days Fergie is NOT there, but certain quizzes and tests MUST be done while being monitored. The lab usually closes at 5 pm, but on the days Fergie is there, he stays until 6pm. Students may sign up for more than one class.

The pilot program started slowly, with very few students and poor attendance. The recovery modules are not easy, two students dropped out of the program. There are more students in Tohajiilee who are behind in their credits, but do not take advantage of this service.

The IED is planning to buy our own GradPoint licenses and offer credit recovery, at selected sites, to ALL APS American Indian students; using GradPoint for summer school classes may be an option. Seniors working toward graduation will have the first priority, but students in any grade, who need to make up lost credit, are eligible. GradPoint is flexible enough so that if a student only needs one semester of a full-year class, we can accommodate them.

I still believe that a student interacting with teachers and other students, in a regular classroom setting, is a valuable part of a high school education. However, the GradPoint credit recovery option is flexible, self-paced and ready on-demand as a tool to improve the graduation rates of American Indian students across the APS district.

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Credit Recovery for Native American Students

Mitchell ES

has a new program for Native American students! Ms. Josephine Medrano is the Indian Education Resource Teacher who will instruct her Native American students in grades K-5 with intervention strategies in reading and math. She will use the Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, and Fundations multi-sensory reading programs to guide her students in becoming proficient in reading and writing. The 6-Traits Writing Process will also be implemented to improve students writing and Language Arts skills.

A variety of Native American literature with an emphasis on indigenous values will be incorporated into the program.

The values which are taught in the literature units are belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. Students are guided in activities to incorporate these values into their daily lives to be happy and successful in all they do.

I have incorporated a Buddy Reading Program into my curriculum. My group of 7 third graders read to a kindergarten student, share writing projects with them, and the kindergarten students also have a chance to read short stories to their buddies. My third graders truly enjoy engaging their kindergarten buddies in literacy development as you can see from the pictures below!

Josephine Medrano, Resource Teacher
Mitchell Elementary School
**Eubank ES**

Our school has a wonderful population of Native American students. Students come to Ms. Harjo’s room P-10 to improve their skills in math and reading. Students in grades 5 and 4 are working on multiplication and manipulation of fractions; we are also reading Buffalo Dreams and comparing text to our Indigenous Values of belonging, generosity, mastery, and independence.

Students in grade 3 are regrouping subtraction problems and getting comfortable with fractions. Also, we are reading Buffalo Before Breakfast so as to understand and write descriptions, summaries, and main ideas. Grade 2 students are developing strategies for subtraction, and are reading Little Black, A Horse so as to understand and write summaries.

Students in Grade 1 are practicing sight words, basic reading and sounding skills. In addition to working on basic addition and subtraction. Kindergarten students are learning basic alphabet and number sense. All students use technology for vocabulary building. We also use the computer to test math skills which are connected to understanding our readings.

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**Maps Abound At Zia ES**

In Ms. Harjo’s class, students in upper primary grades, fifth and fourth, are creating and reading maps of Indigenous Peoples’ lands. Grade 5 students are reading informational text regarding the Navajo Nation and developing scaled down individual maps of the Navajo Nation. We practice fluency in our reading and reasoning. Brandon Platero is showing his personal map (photo).

Likewise, fourth grade students are reading informational text about making pottery and locating Pueblos on a map of New Mexico. These students are displaying their maps and textbook Children of Clay: A Family of Pueblo Potters, shown from left to right, back: Eveana Sauceda, Leticia Dixon, Jordan Tsosie; center: Kieana Sanchez, Celeste Garcia; front: Christian Tom.

Additionally, the class of third graders are reading a story about a Shoshoni youth and bullying. This story will lead into building self-esteem against drug and alcohol use. We practice rules for reading and understanding what we read. Angelina Garza and Daishaun Gould are reading the Shoshoni story; Naomi Notah and Ashley Harjo display woven hearts.

All students use technology for vocabulary building. We also use the computer to test math skills which are connected to understanding our readings.
My name is Brittany Tabor. I am of the Bitterwater People clan, born for the African American People. The Meadow People are my maternal grandfather's clan and the African American People are my paternal grandfathers. I was born and raised on the Navajo Nation in a small community called Sawmill which is approximately 40 miles from Window Rock, Arizona.

I have been working with 8th, 9th and 10th graders in areas such as academic support, mentorship, organization, goal-setting, grade transition and college readiness. My mentorship sessions with students consist of reviewing grades, attendance, in class participation and discussing short-term and long-term goals. For sophomore and freshmen students lacking credits, we discuss credit recovery options available to them.

I believe it is important to start having conversations about planning for a student's future during their 8th grade year, and to continue having these conversations well into their freshmen and sophomore years. During our mentoring sessions, we also discuss academic opportunities such as summer programs and high school to college outreach opportunities available to them.

I look forward to a successful and productive school year!