Navajo Language

More APS Native American Students Participating In Navajo Language Classes

Three years ago the Indian Education Department began offering its Navajo Language classes at two high schools in the Albuquerque Public Schools. Since the beginning of our program students from 10 high schools are now attending Navajo Language I, II, and III from Teachers, Ms. Mildred Chiquito and Mr. Paul Phillips. The classes are taught at West Mesa High (WMHS) School and at Albuquerque High School/Career Enrichment Center (AHS/CEC).

Ms. Chiquito says students in her beginning classes are learning the basics of the Navajo sound system and are able identify: diagraphs, diphthongs and symbols that make the Navajo sound of the alphabet. They are working on a weaving project related to the Native American spiritual value of “Belonging.” In this project, students are using colors that represent themselves or family members.

In Ms. Chiquito’s Navajo Language class, two students are working on: comprehending Navajo Stories, writing a short story, related to their personal experiences and Native Foods they have enjoyed. In another project, students are building Hogan structures as a way to personalize their stories.

Ms. Chiquito’s program recently participated with other foreign language classes at West Mesa in a collaborative event that involved students from: Navajo, Spanish, Italian and French classes. The students drew names and created holiday cards in their respective languages and presented the cards during a joint classroom exercise as a way to build appreciation of other cultures from around the world.

Mr. Phillips’ students taking Navajo Language classes at the Albuquerque High School/Career Enrichment Center recently offered these comments about their classroom experiences.

Christon Manuelito, a sophomore at Volcano Vista HS says;

“For years as a child I have heard my family talk in Navajo and I had no clue what they were saying. My great grandmother spoke mostly Navajo and when she talked to me I would wait for someone to translate what she said to me. For me, learning Navajo has already helped me get closer to my family. One time my father said something to my sister and she asked me to translate for her. “

Shayla Hanley says;

“I am a sophomore at Volcano Vista HS who attends Navajo language class at CEC. The Navajo class is very helpful to my fellow students. Hastiin (Mr.) Phillips is a great teacher and is very helpful. He helps us speak, write, and read our language. We also learn about; The lives of a traditional family and the roles for each member in the family. We learned about our clans and how to introduce ourselves or someone else. I think this is a great class to take and to experience.”

Tamara Begay, a senior at Eldorado HS, says;

“The Navajo language class at CEC has brought me closer to my culture. I not only learned the language, but the Navajo culture is taught as well. The smaller classes have given students a better chance to learn the language with more direct instruction. My Navajo vocabulary has been expanded, as well as, my knowledge of the Navajo culture, the use of the Rosetta Stone program has helped tremendously.”

Christon, Tamara, and Shayla have participated in reading the “Coyote and Lizard” story in Navajo during the AHS Native American culture night on December 5, 2012. This was the first Navajo Coyote Storytelling event for the Navajo language class at AHS/CEC and the Indian Education Department (IED). Congratulations to the three students and others for their participation of traditional storytelling in the Navajo language.

Submitted by: Mildred Chiquito, Navajo Language Teacher WMHS, and Paul D. Phillips, Navajo Language Teacher CEC
Greetings from Highland High School, Home of the Hornets:

Another year has begun with new staff, new space, and a group of enthusiastic new students. The new staff is resource teacher, Margery Buckner who has been on the move the last two years within APS Indian Education, from Cleveland Middle School/Del Norte High School to Highland High School. The new room is room 222, in the main building on the second floor. New Native American students are arriving every day to add to the great students already here.

HHS Native Students Are Involved – Native HHS students are involved this year. Miranda Lee, Miss Native HHS, is editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Highland Highlight, plays on the volleyball and softball teams and is a section leader for the Marching Band to name a few of her activities. She has also been an organizer of this year’s Native Leadership team. We have various Native students on the football team, cheerleading squad, boys’ and girls’ basketball teams, ROTC, guitar performers and involved in many other clubs and organizations. HHS Chief Dru Martinez has been busy with his own dance group. They have been traveling to perform in distant cities and states. Native Hornets are on the move!

Community Dinner – On August 18, we hosted a Community Potluck and found more “star performers” for HHS. About 50 people attended and enjoyed the food, and the entertainment. Mr. Scott Elder, HHS principal, welcomed visitors while Miss Native HHS and MC Miranda Lee kept the program going. HHS graduate and traditional singer extraordinaire, Vernell Sandoval sang original Navajo songs and his sister and current HHS student, Verlonda Sandoval presented the Navajo Ribbon Dance. Shelaine Johnson, Lavonnia Barbone and Jerica Yanito presented the Plains Fancy Shawl dance. Jon Ghahtate, HHS teacher, provided the music and door prizes. We have plans for a second potluck dinner in March so watch for our announcements.

HHS Multicultural Assembly – Dru Martinez organized and choreographed a modern hip-hop dance routine using Native-influenced music for the annual Multicultural Assembly. It was well received by students, staff and visitors. Dru was a task-master from start to finish: signing up to perform, finding dancers, setting up practice times at lunch and after school, teaching the routine and just making sure everyone was ready. Congratulations to Dru and his HHS group! We expect more great student performances under his direction!

New to HHS, Not to APS – Mrs. Buckner is the new resource teacher at Highland High School but began her career in 1978 as an English teacher at Valley High School. In addition to Valley High School, she has been a teacher at Manzano High School, Taylor Middle School, Jimmy Carter Middle School, Cleveland Middle School and Del Norte High School. She has also been a part of APS Indian Education as a Home-School Liaison at North Area Office and a tutor and educational assistant. She graduated from Manzano High School and the University of New Mexico with a BA in English and Political Science. She returned to UNM to receive her teaching credentials and the rest is history.

Mrs. Buckner is an APS product having attended APS schools from first through twelfth grades. She also can name all her elementary teachers. She and her husband of 38 years, Jerry, have two grown daughters who also are APS products and La Cueva HS graduates. Mrs. Buckner is from four tribes: Southern Cheyenne-Arapaho, Navajo, and Santee Sioux. She looks forward to meeting all Native students and their parents throughout the course of this school year, so stop by Room 222 (like the tv show of yesteryear) and say hello.
Though I have only been working as the Native Studies Teacher at Jimmy Carter Middle School for a couple months now, I feel like I have known my students for years. Keeping the Indigenous values that the class is studying in mind, it seems that the sense of belonging within the classes and the group as a whole has increased immensely since the beginning of the year. We have been incorporating all of the Indigenous Values: belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery into our lessons. I can see these qualities improving within my students. I look forward to seeing the fruition of their efforts at the end of the year.

In class we have recently wrapped up a unit about the relationship between the Apache Indian Tribe and horses. The students dived into research on this topic for a five paragraph essay. I supported their work for the essay with lessons that included KWL charts (what you know, want to know, and what you learned), Cornell note-taking, and computer website research. In order to further support their writing skill progression I have a daily journal question or prompt that they need to respond to with a five sentence paragraph. The simple act of constant practice will improve their writing ability. The journals entries all with other writings will be used to aid their spelling through a program in which students test themselves on words they actually use and need improvement on. This process gives them insight into their own learning while also aiding their want to improve themselves by seeking new knowledge. The class also has started to do the Flash Spelling computer program which follows their personal progress. It seems the students enjoy this activity and look forward to increase it heavily within coming weeks.

Many of the students wonder why math is on the agenda in Native Studies. It just so happens to be an integral part of the program. We have been focusing on multiplication facts and a constant repetition to help them to internalize them. I help to reinforce their math skills with other learning activities related to the Native Unit we are working on as well. Soon students will be engaging in a Math in a Flash computer program. Enhancing students’ basic skills will only help to improve performance in other classes. My students’ success and confidence in their abilities is my ultimate goal for them. I have been lucky enough to receive on-going training in Carnegie Math. It has been a great mind-bending experience with a whole new way to look at math which I have really enjoyed. I look forward to bringing that same enjoyment into the classroom.

This month we are immersing ourselves in the art of Native American Storytelling and its importance in maintaining a culture of people. One aspect of this we are focusing on is the Cosmos. Students recently engaged in a project where they used their own Tribal flag as a template to create their own personalized tribal flag. I enjoyed seeing the students pour their creativity and selves into this work. Some added personal touches such as musical interests and original poetry. Coming from a fine arts background myself I have to say I was impressed with some of the talent I saw. Another focus of the class for the next couple of months is something I like to call Native Americans Now! I have been showcasing several admirable people from different Native Tribes that students can look up to. I intend to highlight people in many different areas of talent (such as musician, actors, artists, politicians, scientists, community leaders, etc). They will eventually use this knowledge for a big project in which they will pick a specific person to research because they look up to them. I think this is going to be an eye-opening experience for them to think about whom they are and who they want to become (and can)!
Chaparral Elementary

Students in Indian Education Literacy classes at Chaparral Elementary started the school year by setting personal goals to achieve higher District Benchmark Assessment scores in an effort to meet grade level academic expectations in Reading and Math through incorporating the values of Belonging and Independence into daily routines and habits. As the semester progressed, not only did they build camaraderie, their classroom became a safe and comfortable environment in which they shared knowledge and skills. They also supported one another through academic lessons and activities as a group and as partners. They came to school prepared to learn and ready to participate fully in class and for every productive class time they earned letters spelling “belonging”. When all students in each grade earned all letters, celebration was in order. They learned that being perseverant in practicing these important values often resulted in building reading stamina and concentration but also promoted better assessment scores.

Recently the fifth graders celebrated their first semester achievement of reaching proficiency in either Reading or Math. They enjoyed sharing snacks and activities. Together they have accomplished goals which, individually, seemed daunting and they are set to achieve even more during the second semester.

Lucy Platero, Resource Teacher.

College and Career Readiness Specialist (Grades 6-8)

My name is Maria Acosta; I am the new College & Career Readiness Specialist for the Indian Education Department with the Albuquerque Public School district. I am not new to APS, as I’ve had 6 years of experience in APS working with middle schools. Since coming onboard I’ve already had an opportunity to make contact with most of the middle schools in the school district and now I’m working on identifying the students in those schools who need my support. I will also make contact with the parents of those students.

My focus for this school year, 2012-2013, are grades 6th, 7th, and 8th. During my visits to schools, my support assistance to students include: working on academic tracks towards high school credits, helping choose classes for high school; mentoring and helping make a successful transition to high school, focus on academic success in math and reading, and coordination of the city sponsored annual event, School to Work.

I look forward to meeting with students and the parents I’m excited for a successful school year with the Indian Education Department. Please feel free to contact me at email: acosta_maria@aps.edu and phone: 884-6392 ext. 80443.

Classroom Values chart used by Indian Education Literacy class students to support academic progress.
Our Indian Education students at Edmund G. Ross Elementary School engage in activities that develop the skills and knowledge they need to be able to compete successfully in this ever-changing world. All of these activities are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. This means that our children are provided with clear and realistic goals for success, activities that stimulate higher order thinking, and are expected to demonstrate mastery of not only the set educational goals for their respective grade levels, but the application of the Native American Values also known as the Circle of Courage.

During our weekly Native American Studies, students have been reading different Native American books at varying instructional levels relative to the theme, “Community”. After reading these books, they are expected to be able to articulate the value of learning from their elders; why it is important to participate and learn about their role within their respective communities; why it is important to demonstrate responsibility within their communities; why it is necessary for people to learn from their ancestors and from each other; and why consider all aspects of a community when making important decisions and changes. Also, students show their understanding of the concepts surrounding the theme “Community” using varied strategies that they learn along the way, such as the use of graphic organizers (T charts, 3-4 column charts), use of pictures and illustrations, the use of technology during Expert Groups presentations, and citing pieces of textual evidence to support their analysis of what the text says explicitly or the inferences they have drawn from the text.

In Reading and Math, our students focus on the skills that they need to master or exceed their grade level standards before the end of the school year by engaging themselves in targeted intervention lessons. These intervention programs are curricular methodologies that integrate various modalities of literacy instruction. Assessment based planning is at the core of these programs. This approach is characterized by explicit skill instruction and the use of authentic texts that adhere firmly to the Common Core State Standards. Through various modalities, we are implementing a well planned comprehensive Indigenous Curriculum and Reading/Math literacy programs that reflect a gradual release of control, whereby responsibility is gradually shifted to the students. Some of these activities may make our students feel uncomfortable as they are encouraged to do a lot of the thinking, discovery, inferring, and researching.

With that said, I would like to let you, our parents, know that I need your unfaltering support as we help our children overcome the roadblocks that come they way. With you, everything is possible. Our children CAN and WILL SUCCEED!

Walter Cabutaje, Resource Teacher

Kindergarten students, Isabella Velarde and Lucas DeAngelo, Rock and Rollin’ to the tune of “The Number Rock” (left). They use numbered footprints and handprints to create their Thanksgiving Turkey (middle picture) and to demonstrate mastery of their numerals 1-20, colors, and letters. Right photo, showing their Number Puzzle outputs with great pride!

FUTURE SCIENTISTS: Fourth Graders (left to right) Morgan Tomlinson, Ira Karty, and Reece Mcneal effectively utilize technology as they present their observations from the Class Nature Walk.
Our College and Career Readiness Program is off to a great start this year! My name is Shannon Romero, I am from the pueblos of Cochiti, Santo Domingo and also the Navajo Nation. I am the College and Career Readiness Specialist at the Indian Education Department for grades 11 and 12. These photos were taken at our West Mesa presentation, where we talked with 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade Native American High School students about Higher Education and Programs that are available to them to help them attain higher education. At our presentation I invite other programs to come and present to the students, we have College Horizons a summer College Prep Program for Native American/Alaskan Native and Hawaiian Natives, Institute of American Indian Arts talks about dual credit, UNM Indian Student Services talks about bridge program, and Gate Millennium talks about how to be a scholarship recipient. We have done presentations at West Mesa, Del Norte, Eldorado, Atrisco Heritage, Highland, Sandia, La Cueva, Volcano Vista, and New Futures. That is a total of 135 seniors that the Indian Education Department has reached out to in about 2 weeks. We are now is the process of setting up presentations at all High Schools in APS. Like Mrs. Thompson said “Our Destination is Graduation”! Good Luck to all the 2013 Graduates!

Shannon Romero
College Career Readiness Specialist
APS, Indian Education Department
505-252-3080 • romero_shan@aps.edu