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Honoring Connections: Building Healthy Relationships through Native American Perspectives

Honoring Relationships: Building Healthy Friendships through Native Perspectives

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Project partner: Humboldt County Office of Education

Grade Level:
TK-8

Subjects:
Health Education, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), English Language Arts (ELA)

Time Frame:
75 minutes

Slides:
Slides: Healthy Relationships (TK-8)

Script :
Slide notes: Healthy relationships (TK-8)

Links to open resources:
List of Friendship Qualities pg. 22
Guidance on Active Listening

Assessment:
Rubric (optional)

Assess students on:

- **Active Participation**: Students will actively engage in discussions about the components of healthy, unhealthy, and unhealthy friendships. They will be able to identify the key traits

of each relationship type, using Native American values such as respect and community.

- **Reflection**: Students will create a list of what they learned about healthy friendships, identifying key elements of what makes friendships healthy and unhealthy. They will also reflect on how Native American cultural values play a role in the development of healthy relationships.

- **Friendship Worksheet**: Students will complete a worksheet where they'll reflect on what qualities they want to build in their friendships based on the values discussed (community, respect, kindness).

Materials Needed:

● Computer and Projector or whole class media presenter
● Art supplies: colored pencils, pens, pencils, construction paper, butcher paper, drawing paper
● Journal/book

Curriculum Themes

- ☐ History
- ☑ Cultural Strengths
- ☐ Law/Government
- ☐ Relationship to Place
- ☐ Cross Curricular Integration

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to the concept of healthy friendships and effective communication. Through interactive activities and discussions engaging with Native American cultural practices that support healthy relationship development, students will learn how to identify qualities of a good friend, practice communication skills, and express their emotions respectfully.

Learning Goals

- Identify and describe the elements of healthy friendships.
- Demonstrate effective communication skills through role-playing activities.
- Communicate openly and authentically, reflecting traditional Native American communication styles, such as storytelling and active listening.

Student learning outcomes:

- **I can** identify the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy friendships and apply cultural values, like respect and community, to these relationships.

- **I can** work with a partner to identify healthy friendship habits I want to improve and unhealthy ones I want to change. I'll also reflect on how my family or cultural background influences my relationships.

- **I'm committed** to supporting others in building healthy friendships, even when our beliefs differ, whether we come from the same or different cultural backgrounds.

Background for Educators

This lesson helps students explore the concept of personal relationships by incorporating Native American cultural perspectives. Through discussions and activities, students will examine the values of community, respect, and connection to the land as they relate to healthy and unhealthy relationships. They will use brainstorming, visual depictions, role play, and group discussions to develop a deeper understanding of how these cultural values can inform their own relationships and contribute to healthier connections in their lives.

When teaching about Native American cultures, it's essential to recognize that each tribe, community, and family has its own distinct traditions, values, and ways of knowing. This lesson offers an opportunity to approach learning with curiosity and cultural humility—a chance for both students and adults to explore and reflect on Native American cultural elements together. As you move through the lesson, keep the following key points in mind:

1. **Respect Diversity Within Cultures:**
    - Avoid making generalizations about Native cultures. For example, family dynamics can vary widely. In some families, fathers may not have lived in the same home as the mother and children, while in others, the whole family slept together. Some fathers might stay out late for cultural or spiritual practices.
    - Traditional roles within families were often based on individual strengths and needs rather than strict gender roles. For instance, responsibilities like hunting or spiritual duties were assigned based on abilities and needs, not solely by gender.
2. **Different Meanings of Cultural Symbols:**
    - Facial tattoos, for example, can have various meanings. For some, they are beautiful marks or symbols of relationship status or tribal heritage. For others, they may hold deeper spiritual significance.
3. **Impact of Colonization:**
    - Colonization has affected Native cultures in many ways. Some families may have limited access to cultural and spiritual knowledge or may feel uncomfortable sharing it. This history includes the suppression of

Indigenous languages and cultural practices to protect families from government policies

The legacy of colonization includes significant trauma, such as the impact of Native American boarding schools, which disrupted cultural and familial structures and led to challenges like PTSD and anxiety. These effects can influence how students experience and share their cultural backgrounds.

4. **Approach with Curiosity and Cultural Humility:**
    - Approach all discussions about Native cultures with a mindset of curiosity and respect. Be open to learning and understanding the diverse experiences and perspectives of your students.
5. **Creating a Respectful Classroom Environment:**
    - Establish and maintain a classroom environment that honors and respects all cultural backgrounds. This helps students feel valued and understood, creating a more inclusive and supportive learning space.

By keeping these considerations in mind, you can better support your students as they explore and understand their own and others' cultural practices and histories.

Curriculum Standards

Grades TK–2

- **1.1.N**: Identify characteristics of healthy friendships.
- **4.1.SM**: Demonstrate how to ask for help from family and school helpers.
- **5.1.SM**: Use effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to ask for help.

Grades 3–5

- **1.2.G**: Describe characteristics of healthy relationships.
- **5.1.M**: Apply decision-making processes to promote safe social interactions.

Grades 6–8

- **1.4.M**: Describe signs of unhealthy relationships.
- **4.2.M**: Demonstrate how to communicate empathy and support to a peer.

Teacher Directions

- Display slides and have materials ready to distribute before each activity, including journal and drawing materials. Lead class through content on slides, following activity prompts and teacher script Slide notes: Healthy relationships (TK-8)

- **Consider offering the following trigger warning**:
  "Before we begin today's lesson, I want to acknowledge that we will be discussing topics related to relationships, including healthy and unhealthy dynamics, friendship qualities, and how respect and community play roles in our friendships. These are important conversations, but I also recognize that some of this content may bring up difficult emotions. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you are welcome to take a break, step outside, or talk to me privately. You are not required to share personal experiences, and our goal is to create a respectful and supportive space for learning. If you need support, please let me know, or reach out to a trusted adult or counselor. Let's all commit to being mindful, respectful, and supportive of each other during this discussion."

Key Points to Remember:

- Approach all discussions with an open mind, respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of your students.

- Foster a safe and respectful environment for sharing ideas and reflections.

- Encourage students to reflect on how they can apply Native American values to their personal friendships and relationships.

- **Cultural Sensitivity**: The teacher should understand that different tribes, communities, and families may have different interpretations of cultural values and relationship dynamics. These differences should be respected and acknowledged throughout the lesson.

- **Cultural Humility**: The teacher should be prepared to engage in conversation about various cultural practices, even if they differ from their own, and lead with curiosity. Approach any questions with openness and a willingness to learn from the students' own backgrounds and experiences.

- **Group Engagement**: Actively engage the students in group activities and discussions. Encourage all students to share their thoughts and opinions while maintaining a respectful, supportive atmosphere.

Scaffolding

English language learners will benefit from the following strategies:

Emerging: Discussing terms with a partner and role playing those terms. Some terms like "reciprocity" may require brainstorming multiple examples of what this looks like and how it functions in social interactions.

Expanding: Discussing how the terms may connect with their personal life experiences and illustrating this connection; use of "sentence starters," as detailed on the teacher script.

Bridging: Extended writing and reflection on the qualities of healthy friendships.

Additional Resources for Teachers

- Cultural Humility
- Colonial Education
- Description and Effects of Boarding Schools
- Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship
- Healthy Relationship Toolkit
- Land and Repair Acknowledgement and Action
- Bruchac, J. (2018). *We are grateful: Otsaliheliga*. Illustrated by Lisa Fifield. Charlesbridge.
- Love is Respect
- Diversity Toolkit
- Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practice Documentary
- Healthy Relationships
- Expect Respect: Healthy Relationships
- Cultural Survival
- Healthychildren.org.

References

Healthy Relationship Resource Kit

Edutopia

Teachers Pay Teachers SEL

Unit Authors and Researchers

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California Native American Studies Model Curriculum

The California Native American Studies Model Curriculum (NASMC) will support the design and development of open-source lesson plans, primary source documents, planning resources, teaching strategies, and professional development activities to assist California K-12 educators in teaching about California Native American Studies. Per AB 167, the NASMC is defined as lesson plans, primary source documents, planning resources, teaching strategies, and professional development activities to assist educators in teaching about Native American Studies. The traditional cultural knowledge within lessons, including Native language, art, media and stories, are owned by the respective Tribal nations, Native knowledge keepers, artists, producers and authors of the curriculum as indicated in each lesson.