

Native American Learning Behaviors and Teaching Strategies

Note: Characteristics are general. Students may exhibit one or more behaviors.

Native American Behaviors:*

- avoid speaker/listener
- less “encouraging signs”
- auditory messages treated differently—delayed responses
- non-verbal communication
- cooperation***
- group needs more important ***
- present goal important*** [future: what will be, will be]
- control selves, not others ***
- orientation to present time
- participation after observation; participation only when certain of ability ***
- privacy and non-interference
- emotional relationships valued***

* adapted from Hornet, D.M. (1990) *Elementary-Age Tasks, Cultural Identity, and the Academic Performance of Young American Indian Children*. *Action in Teacher Education*. XII-3, 43-49.

**derived from review of literature and classroom experience

***service learning projects allow expression of these behaviors

Teaching Strategies**

- Share, discuss, accept differences
- Share, discuss accept differences [think time]
- Allow ‘think time’
- Allow alternative modes for reflective learning: learning logs; letters to teacher, friends; pictorial summarizing
- Incorporate whole language/language experience strategies for student choice—cooperation between teacher and student
- Cooperative learning Activities; homework can be family sharing
- Explain ‘Big Picture’ with student input
- Encourage cooperation, teamwork; reflective thinking
- Refer to overall goal; focus on today; keep log of daily learning
- Structure new lessons to move from what students already know or can do to increase student certainty of own ability [KWL]; model language and examples; integrate curriculum
- Respect student attempts
- Get to know students individually; care; encourage family participation

Assessment Strategies**

- Focus on academic behavior
- Vary format: oral, written or pictorial responses; projects
- Depth of response on individual basis
- Joint assessments in conferences or written dialogues: focus on strengths
- Ongoing, positive conferences or written dialogues; focus on strengths and improvements; help set goals
- Individual goals that support group
- Set small goals with student; assess depth of reflection, goals, and follow-up
- Self and group evaluation of projects;
- On-going evaluation during projects by students and teacher
- Schematic webs, preview topics though discussion [KWL]
- Conference when student is ready [certain]; self-evaluation; keep portfolio of teacher and student selected work; allow oral tests if students’ reading and writing ability limited
- Conference and help with goals; send positive notes home about student growth