Developing an American Indian - Interdisciplinary Thematic Unit on Indigenous Foods

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Session Description

- Join us for a hands on American Indian interdisciplinary thematic unit development session where we will focus on Indigenous foods. We will consider both horizontal and vertical alignment between subjects and grade levels, as well as encouraging family and community involvement. We will consider identity, pre-existing curricular resources, evaluative tools, and standards as we brainstorm ideas and begin shaping our AI-ITU.

What is an American Indian-Interdisciplinary Thematic Unit (AI-ITU)

- American Indian-Interdisciplinary Thematic Units provide students with an opportunity to study an American Indian culturally based theme that crosses the boundaries of two or more academic disciplines, while connecting the classroom with tribal communities and families.

Two Paths Toward Indigenizing the Curriculum

- Finding the Indian in the curriculum.
  - This is the most common approach.
  - It assumes that the current materials and methods can be replaced or enhanced with Indian materials and methods to still meet the appropriate standards.
- Finding the curriculum in the Indian.
  - This is more uncommon.
  - It assumes that we start with Indian ideas and discern how they meet the appropriate standards.

Standards Alignment

- Tribal Standards: All tribes have the sovereign authority to create and implement their own standards. Many tribes have not yet articulated such standards, but may be in process of developing them.

- State/Common Core State Standards: Educators are very familiar with the process of aligning their activities with state standards. This can be extremely tedious and time consuming. Encountering resistance is common when trying to introduce new methods and materials into schools and classrooms.

- National Standards: Discipline/area specific standards also influence tribal, state, and local preferences and practices.

CREDE Standards for Effective Pedagogy (As adapted from: CREDE, 2011)

- Teachers and students working together on an American Indian focused joint productive activity
- Developing language and literacy skills (including Native and non-Native) across the curriculum while focusing on American Indian concepts
- Connecting American Indian focused lessons to students' lives
- Engaging students in challenging lessons focused on American Indian concepts
- Emphasizing dialogue about American Indian concepts over lectures
- Teachers and students modeling American Indian behavior, thinking, processes and procedures and putting them into practice
- Students generating and directing activities focused on American Indian themes

Stages of Multicultural Curriculum Transformation (As adapted from: Gorski, 2012)

- 0. Mainstream Approach: The AIITU reflects only non-Indian cultures, or is biased against American Indian cultures.
- 1. Contributions Approach: The AIITU focuses on American Indian heroes and holidays and discrete cultural elements, and the primary focus remains non-Indian.
- 2. Additive Approach: American Indian content, concepts, themes, and perspective are included in the AIITU, but the primary focus remains non-Indian.
- 3. Transformative Approach: Structure of the AIITU is changed to facilitate student understanding of concepts, issues, events and themes from the perspectives of American Indian cultural groups.
- 4. Social Action Approach: Students make decisions on important American Indian social issues and take actions to help solve them.

American Indian Curriculum Materials Checklist (As adapted from: Cubbins, 2000; Lindala, 2013; Reinhardt & Maday, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1982; and Slapin & Seale, 2006)

- Labels and Identity Construction: Labels are used appropriately and identities are used as constructed by Indians themselves.

- Cultural and Linguistic Accuracy: Cultural and linguistic references are accurate and have been authenticated by the appropriate tribal groups.

- Historical Accuracy: Historical references are accurate to the time period and have been authenticated by more than one source.

- Legality and Authority: Authorship and illustrator credentials clearly indicate if the materials were created by an American Indian in accordance with PL 101-164 of 1990 the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, and if this work was completed for, or on behalf of, an Indian tribe or other entity.

- Sources and Credibility: All sources of information are clearly indicated and have been cited or recommended by other trustworthy sources. The content has not been misappropriated, or bastardized.

American Indian Curriculum Materials Checklist (Cont.)

- Generalizations and Specificity: Tribes are not clumped together. If they are grouped with other tribes, it is done so appropriately based on shared concerns or backgrounds.

- Invisibility, Tokenization, Fragmentation, and Isolation: Concepts, tribes, and people are included in a robust manner when appropriate, not tokenized, fragmented, or isolated within the materials.

- Stereotypes: Can be positive, or negative, and both can be damaging to self-image and relationships.

- Perspectives: Indian perspectives are included and may be shown in contrast to non-Indian perspectives.

- Unreality: Negative concepts are not glossed over or excluded.

- Friendly Wording: Anti-Indian biased/loaded words are not used.

Vertical and Horizontal Alignment

- By incorporate both vertical and horizontal alignment, the students will be able to see the natural connections of the subject matter with multiple aspects of their lives.

- Vertical alignment may be thought of as connecting lower grades and upper grades, as well as connecting children with adults.

- Horizontal alignment may be thought of as connecting classrooms within the same grade, as well as connecting classrooms with other aspects of the school, community, and families.

- Example: The Meskwaki Settlement School implemented a school/community activity focused on identity and revitalization of traditional cultural knowledge. All of the students, faculty, and staff created identity cubes...

Student-Centered Teaching and Learning

- According to Dr. Richard Felder, student-centered teaching and learning focuses on:
  - active learning, in which students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class;
  - cooperative learning, in which students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assure both positive interdependence and individual accountability;
  - and inductive teaching and learning, in which students are first presented with challenges (questions or problems) and learn the course material in the context of addressing the challenges. (Felder, nd)

Tribal Imperatives

- The focus on academic achievement in core subject areas often negates tribal imperatives for Native language and culture revitalization.

- It is possible for students to go from pre-school to PhD and learn very little about Indian anything in their classes.

- Indian education is often supplemental and discounted because it is seen as unnecessary and not part of the core.

- It is often seen as important "to" Indian students, but not as important for all students.

Essential Steps of an AI-ITU (As adapted from Roberts & Kellough, 2008)

- 1. Select an American Indian theme.
- 2. Write an overview that includes goals, major concepts, and instructional objectives. This is often standards driven.
- 3. Identify instructional resources including technology and community.
- 4. Organize the subject matter including questions, potential experiences, and activities.
- 5. Plan and arrange the classroom environment in a way that will stimulate student learning and encourage them to want to know more about the theme.
- 6. Consider including a variety of best practices.
- 7. Plan a finale.

Domains of Learning (Sincero, nd)

- The **COGNITIVE DOMAIN** involves the development of our mental skills and the acquisition of knowledge. The six categories under this domain are:
    - 1.Knowledge: the ability to recall data and/or information.
    - Example: A child recites the English alphabet.

    - 2.Comprehension: the ability to understand the meaning of what is known.
    - Example: A teacher explains a theory in his own words.

    - 3.Application: the ability to utilize an abstraction or to use knowledge in a new situation.
    - Example: A nurse intern applies what she learned in her Psychology class when she talks to patients.

    - 4.Analysis: the ability to differentiate facts and opinions.
    - Example: A lawyer was able to win over a case after recognizing logical fallacies in the reasoning of the offender.

    - 5.Synthesis: the ability to integrate different elements or concepts in order to form a sound pattern or structure so a new meaning can be established.
    - Examples: A therapist combines yoga, biofeedback and support group therapy in creating a care plan for his patient.

    - 6.Evaluation: the ability to come up with judgments about the importance of concepts.
    - Examples: A businessman selects the most efficient way of selling products.

Domains of Learning (Cont.)

- The **AFFECTIVE DOMAIN** involves our feelings, emotions and attitudes. This domain is categorized into 5 subdomains, which include:
  - 1.Receiving Phenomena: the awareness of feelings and emotions as well as the ability to utilize selected attention.
  - Example: Listening attentively to a friend.

  - 2.Responding to Phenomena: active participation of the learner.
  - Example: Participating in a group discussion.

  - 3.Valuing: the ability to see the worth of something and express it.
  - Example: An activist shares his ideas on the increase in salary of laborers.

  - 4.Organization: ability to prioritize a value over another and create a unique value system.
  - Example: A teenager spends more time in her studies than with her boyfriend.

  - 5.Characterization: the ability to internalize values and let them control the person`s behaviour.
  - Example: A man marries a woman not for her looks but for what she is.

Domains of Learning (Cont.)

- The **PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAIN** is comprised of utilizing motor skills and coordinating them. The seven categories under this include:
  - 1.Perception: the ability to apply sensory information to motor activity.
  - Example: A cook adjusts the heat of stove to achieve the right temperature of the dish.

  - 2.Set: the readiness to act.
  - Example: An obese person displays motivation in performing planned exercise.

  - 3.Guided Response: the ability to imitate a displayed behavior or to utilize trial and error.
  - Example: A person follows the manual in operating a machine.

  - 4.Mechanism: the ability to convert learned responses into habitual actions with proficiency and confidence.
  - Example: A mother was able to cook a delicious meal after practicing how to cook it.

  - 5.Complex Overt Response: the ability to skilfully perform complex patterns of actions.
  - Example: Typing a report on a computer without looking at the keyboard.

  - 6.Adaptation: the ability to modify learned skills to meet special events.
  - Example: A designer uses plastic bottles to create a dress.

  - 7.Origination: creating new movement patterns for a specific situation.
  - Example: A choreographer creates a new dance routine.

Mind Mapping

- Mind maps can help you organize your thoughts and various components of your AI-ITU.

Example Lesson Plan Format

- 1. Descriptive Data
- 2. Goals, Objectives, and Standards
- 3. Rationale
- 4. Procedure
- 5. Assignments and Reminders of Assignments
- 6. Materials and Equipment Needed
- 7. Assessment, Reflection, and Revision
- See handout for blank and sample. Adapt as appropriate for your specific needs.

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