Respect Pillar
Native American Value of Respect

Respecting Elders

Subject matter: Service learning.
Subject matter objective: Identify ways to show respect to elders and understand the contributions elders make to communities.

Life skill to be practiced: Nurturing relationships.
Life skill objective: Feel comfortable talking to elders in the community.

Experience

Introduction
"Unci" is the Lakota word for grandmother. In Native American societies grandmothers, grandfathers, and all elders are given high respect for their life experiences and wisdom. Talk about the proper ways to greet, listen to, and act around elders. Talk about ways to show respect.

Materials
- Books: Choose from the following or other books about elders: "Annie and the Old One" by Miska Miles, "Grandparents Song" by Sheila Hamanaka, "Tear Soup" by Pat Schweibert, or "Lakota Sioux Children and Elders Talk Together" by E. Barrie Kavasch and Barrie Kavasch (this is part of a series that includes books with other tribes, too)
- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons/ markers/colored pencils

Lesson
Read two or three short stories to the class. Before you start reading, tell the children to be thinking about what the stories have in common.

Share
1. What did the stories have in common? (They were all about elderly people.)
2. What parts of the stories did you like best?
Process

Vocabulary: Elders

1. Have you ever heard the phrase “respect your elders”? What does it mean?
2. How do you show respect for your elders?
3. How do you show disrespect for your elders?

Activity

Have the students each select an elderly person they know – relative, neighbor, etc. Have them each create a card for this person. The children should tell in the cards why they appreciate the elder. They may want to include a drawing, story, or photo. After they have finished the cards and letters, the children should share them with the class. Address and mail the letters/cards if you are not doing the next part of the activity.

Plan an “Elder Appreciation Day.” Students may then include an invitation with their cards. Students can help plan the gathering. They can decorate the room and decide on treats and activities. Students may want to come up with a list of questions and put together a trivia game for the elders so the children can learn about the old ways. Students may mail or hand-deliver their cards and invitations.

Generalize

1. Do you think the elders appreciated your kindness? How do you know?
2. Did this activity make you feel more comfortable talking and being with elders? (If they came to the celebration.)

Apply

1. Did you meet elders you didn’t know through this activity?
2. Will you greet elders and pay respect differently after this lesson?

More challenges

1. Students could be assigned to interview an elder they know. You may need to introduce some of them to an elder if they don’t know anyone. Or they could do an interview by mail if their grand parents live far away.

Source: DuVall, R., Building Character and Community in the Classroom, Creative Teaching Press, p. 27.