



# GUIDE FOR USING THE CURRICULUM

## Circle Time

Each lesson begins with soothing music, such as Native American flute music, to begin calming the children and directing them to Circle Time. Create a quiet place in the classroom where everyone can sit comfortably in a circle during the time of storytelling. In order for the story to maintain everybody's undivided attention it is important to ensure that all of the children are a part of the circle and can hear well. Circle time is an important part of each lesson. Holding more than one or smaller circle groups is encouraged depending on the development of each lesson and each group of children. Be sure to respect all ideas and suggestions from the group. The more children who share during this time the better the end result will be. Many successful Head Start teachers provide their students with a symbol, such as a bell or dimmed lights, to signal the start of circle time. Children who are inter-personal learners will especially enjoy this large group sharing and learning session.

### **Generosity**


Children love a good surprise! Hide an item, that relates to the lesson to circle time, in a bag or box. Surprise the children at the end of the meeting and allow them to explore the item and use throughout their play

## Storytelling

Stories are a link between the child's imagination and surroundings. Children form an emotional identification with story characters that lead to them momentarily become that character and experience the same sights, sounds, emotions, smells, and sensations as the character. In this sense, stories represent a bridge between the child's life and the lessons taught by each story. We have attempted to find stories that, although they are not in their original language, are retellings that capture the same imagery and motion while the integrity of the central messages remains clear.

In order to maintain cultural diversity within the curriculum, as well as continuity within the lessons, the stories we have chosen to use come from a wide range of cultures representing various distinct regions of the continental United States. As such, the stories contain words and names in several Native American languages. At the end of each lesson is the glossary and pronunciation guide to assist teachers in explaining these meanings to the children. We suggest adding stories from within your region to each lesson as a way of bringing these teachings closer to home and more pertinent to the cultural life of the children.

Storytelling in Native American cultures represents the living legacy of the people. Native American stories and storytelling are not just for entertainment sake, rather they are an oral tra-



dition, an oral history, designed to pass on tribal wisdom, life lessons and discipline to the next generations. The repetitive nature of storytelling helps the listener to understand these lessons on four levels of consciousness – physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. These four levels are also related to the four stages of life – childhood, youth, adult and elder.

We also suggest a few ways to approach storytelling that may be helpful as you work through these lessons with the children. Begin by reading the stories several times alone before trying to share them with the children. Try “seeing” the story as you tell it and bring it to life with descriptions of things you see as you tell the tales aloud. This helps to bring the characters and events to life and create movement within the mind’s eye

of the children. As the storyteller, you may want to create a simple beginning and ending to say for each story as a way to provide clear ways in and out of the tales and Circle Time with the children (i.e. “Here is a story for Circle Time . . .”, “That’s all.”). When telling a story to children consider the age and attention span of the children as well as story appropriateness. Most stories can be simplified easily by shortening longer sentences or omitting unnecessary words and phrases.

### **Wisdom**

Know your stories WELL! The better you know the story the more exciting you can make it for the children. Use lots of voice variation and body language to tell your story

Before you begin the story, teach the children any singing, chanting, movement or hand claps that go with the tale then have them all join in at the appropriate time. Also introduce any new vocabulary words that may be in the story and briefly discuss the tribe from who the story has come from. While reading the story feel free to stop and ask questions about what has been read so far. After finishing, ask questions about the story that someone who has been listening can easily answer (ex: Where did Water Spider put the burning coal?) Children who are linguistic learners will thoroughly enjoy story time.

## **Circle Time Discussion Questions**

Children have their own natural curiosity and educators are wonderful at supporting their exploration and helping them find answers to their questions. This section of the lessons is to be used to support the children in taking information in and questioning what it means to them and to the world around them. The questions have been developed from each of the stories and should be discussed in a large or small group setting right after the story has been read. The questions can also be used during project or activity time as a way to get children to continue to think about the story concepts. The list of questions is by no means complete and educators should note any other thoughts or ideas.

### **Respect**

Always encourage children to ask questions and provide them with follow up to find the answers!



## Mother Earth and Creation Mural

As the children work on various hands-on art activities throughout the lessons, they are creating one large art project. The lessons are designed to build upon one another and at the end the students will have created a large model of Mother Earth and Creation as seen through their eyes. This mural will include representations of the land, water, fire, creation, air, plants, and stars to give the students a better understanding about how creation works together to survive. A large open space will need to be set up for the construction and display of the mural. The mural will be built upon over the entire eight lessons and therefore needs a location that will allow for the mural to be displayed over a long period of time. Allow children to add to the mural anytime they have new thoughts or ideas about the lessons. Children who learn best through a form of art, Spatial Learners, will be provided the opportunity to develop their skills and share with others.

### Respect

Children will be more willing to participate in artistic activities if they are allowed to explore the materials freely. Always respect each child's artistic efforts with acceptance.

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary words have been included in the curriculum as a way to encourage exposing children to their native languages. Many tribes across the nation have been aggressively working towards the goal of bringing back the language of their people. Addressing vocabulary in lessons allows children of this age group a chance to learn everyday phrases and simple concept words in their native tongue. Vocabulary words in each chapter were taken from the sample stories in the lessons. The vocabulary words have been translated in Lakota in this curriculum and should be changed to reflect other represented tribes of the Head Start program.

### Wisdom

Use the vocabulary words often throughout each day. Get creative and find ways to reward the children for repeating words in their native languages.