



NEBRASKA BY HEART

Folk Arts • Traditional Arts • Folklife
Curriculum Unit • Grades 6–8
nebraskafolklife.org



Teacher's Resource

A Visit From a Traditional Artist

Field trips and attendance at community festivals are two important ways to expose students to cultural expression and creativity in our communities. However, when time and funds don't permit class outings, it's still possible to make these connections by bringing community traditions into the classroom. Many practitioners of traditional arts are generous with their time when it comes to educating young people about their culture and the community's values and traditions.

Identify (or have your students identify) local practitioners of tradition and ask them to visit your class for a talk with students. Be sure to prepare students for the guest by offering a reading from the Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, Nebraska Folklore or some other reference which provides insight into the tradition to be presented. Have students prepare questions in advance which they may ask of your guest (see Handout 2.10 for ideas.) Be sure to have students write thank you notes after the visit too.

Tips for finding speakers/guests:

- a) Seek local figures who offer insight into broader traditions (leaders of church singing or quilting groups, saddlemakers, or officers of hunting or fishing clubs, for example.)
- b) Watch for traveling speakers coming to nearby colleges/universities
- c) Check with local colleges/universities to see if there is a faculty member willing to address a class on a familiar tradition
- d) Ask colleagues at school, church, etc. for suggestions for "engaging" guest speakers
- e) Look for local performers of traditional music and dance, such as polka bands, old time fiddlers, African American gospel performers, or folklorico dance groups who might be willing to perform for your class (a trip to a local free performance and a few well placed questions can get you on the right track here)
- f) Contact your local newspaper for potential speakers/performers. Often the "lifestyles writer" or "local scene" writer can offer you the names of local people who practice particularly interesting art or other traditions.
- g) Contact the Nebraska Folklife Network for additional suggestions.

After the visit, have students write a response to each guest speaker/performer's visit, answering the following questions: 1) Explain how the subject they worked with demonstrates folk culture; 2) Explain in detail the various aspects of the subject's craft, skill, etc.; and 3) Explain why/how this tradition/skill/craft/etc. is important to the local community and its understanding of its heritage.