

Cherokee Language Education through Community Engagement

WCU & the Cherokee Central High School: Pronouns Comprehension, Cross-Cultural Collaboration, and Student Engagement

Faculty member Mary Anna LaFratta (lafratta@email.wcu.edu), Hartwell Francis (hfrancis@email.wcu.edu), Director of Cherokee Language program, and Tom Belt (tbelt@email.wcu.edu), Coordinator, Cherokee Language Program, graphic design faculty in the School of Art and Design, along with the students enrolled in Graphic Design I (ART371) and Intermediate Cherokee II (CHER232) engaged in a collaborative project to design and develop games for learning the Cherokee pronouns and their use in various contexts. Four teams of design students designed a visually interesting and creative learning tool which addressed the following educational intentions: 1) collectable cards combining pronouns, verbs, and nouns; 2) flash cards for learning the unique differences when interacting with objects made of different materials; 3) a board game in which participants play to purchase items on a shopping list complete with reward and penalty cards; and 4) a set of cards in which animals are the subjects engaged in various activities. The games are presented to faculty at Cherokee Central High School for use in the classroom and for feedback with the greater goal of Cherokee language education.

About this collaborative project as an example of community engagement, Professor LaFratta said, "the Cherokee Pronoun Project involved developing several games for learning Cherokee pronouns and how to use them in various contexts. This project involves students, faculty and colleagues from several disciplines. It is important to me for several reasons: It allowed me to develop an interdisciplinary application for graphic design, it provided an opportunity for creative collaborations within the university, it allowed students to explore interesting and fun ideas for learning a language, it is a project useful and tangible products, and, my students and I hope the learning games will be beneficial and effective as learning tools for all sorts of people interested in Cherokee culture and in preserving this language."

If you would like your community engagement work recognized through the STAR Engagement Projects program, please submit your proposals through the [Community-based Activities Faculty Survey](#) administered annually in the spring semester from early April – late May.

