

## Addressing OSEU 4 with Cheryl Medearis

One of the most important things to me as an educator and to work with future educators and to work with in-service teachers is to help them understand that sense of community and what is kinship. And maybe we're not related by blood, maybe your students are and aren't, but to build that strong community of learners and for students to go back and know who their relatives are and to understand who their families are.

And that's a real struggle in this day and age with families that are separated and split and children's names are changed in the court has had a devastating impact. So we have to really think about how we have students go back and know their story. I think that's one of the most powerful assignments that students have done in our class is write your story, tell your story. I do that as part of the class that I do... and it's like, oh really? And then as they get into it, it's a very happy time. There are a lot of tears shed.

They share that and they say, how would you do that in your classroom of third graders or fifth graders so that they can safely tell their story? Maybe not orally, maybe on paper, maybe in a play that they... that we all need to be proud of where we came from. So it's, again, a very important piece of building that community of learners and a safety net for all of us to feel within that understanding.