



**JOE SHIRLEY, JR.**  
*President*

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*Vice-President*

## THE NAVAJO NATION

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### Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr. tells parents their involvement makes the difference for their kids

**KINLICHEE, Ariz.** – Belief in ourselves as parents and confidence in what we do is the teaching that will ensure that our children are happy and successful in life, Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., told parents and grandparents here Thursday.

President Shirley visited *Kin Dah Lichii' Olta* for the third annual Spring Parent Conference and told the 250 participants that getting involved in the psychological, social, educational and spiritual lives of their children is what is needed in every family for children to thrive, be happy and ultimately successful in life.

The theme of the conference was "Partnership, achievement, responsibility, empowerment, nurturing and teamwork." The day included a live remote broadcast by KTNN-660 AM radio with L.A. Williams and Ray Tsosie conducting interviews throughout the morning.

Also speaking was Leland Leonard, executive director of the Navajo Department of Education, Char James from the Department of Behavioral Health who discussed

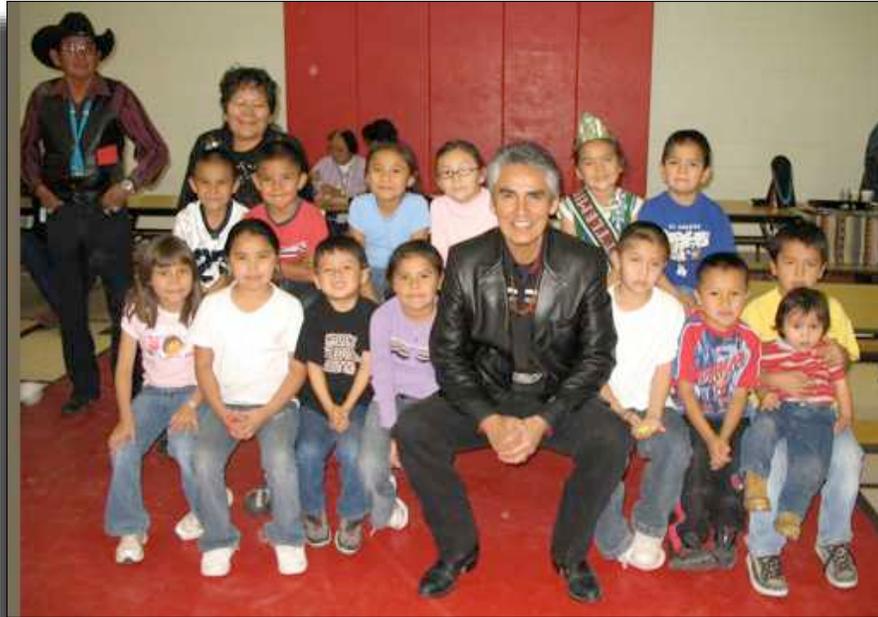
methamphetamine use on the Navajo Nation, Evelina Woody, a senior education specialist who explained how to read test scores and *Kin Dah Lichii' Olta* School Board Vice President Brunella Hubbard who spoke on how parents can be leaders.

Dr. Shirley said involvement in children's lives includes talking to them about their work in school and its value in their lives, ensuring their diet is good and they get enough sleep every night, and nurturing them to do well every single day.



*Keyauni Tracey documents the moment by videoing her friend Chalyn Scott while Charmaine Seaton and Dominique Tsosie, left, look on. The girls are in Mrs. Rose Joe's first grade class at Kin Dah Lichii' Olta.*

“If we do our jobs as parents, we can reach those heights and beyond and have gifted children,” Dr. Shirley said. “However, if we don’t help our kids, they’ll have a hard time.”



*President Shirley poses with Mrs. Rose Joe's first graders of the Kin Dah Lichii' Olta school during the third annual Spring Parent Conference.*

He said when parents feel good about themselves, that carries on to children and gives them a sense of security. He asked that when kids go astray and get into trouble, could it be because we, as parents, as a society, don't believe in ourselves anymore?

“When this happens, kids use drugs and get into mischief,” said Dr. Shirley, a professional social worker. “When kids take this avenue, it's unfortunate. However, going back to our basic principles of compassion and love is what will help them through these periods of struggle.”

He acknowledged how difficult is for many young Navajos to be single parents because the responsibility is so huge.

But he said it's valuable to teach children to strive to be independent

and self-sufficient rather than dependent on parents and grandparent late into their lives.

“We shouldn't have to tell our parents, 'Do this for me,’” Dr. Shirley said. “We can be self-sufficient and be fortunate, return and help people in our family, our community, our nation.”

While child raising is an awesome responsibility, Dr. Shirley said is should be fun as well.

“Sometimes I come home stressed and my children are the ones who help me relax,” he said. “We watch movies or cartoons. It makes you forget about stress-related activities when you look at the world through the eyes of your child a few minutes every day.”

He said he and his wife, Vikki Shirley, have a special partnership when it comes to their children.

“We don't have to be asked,” he said. “We're always there to participate in the activities of their lives. Partnership is the key.”



*Students from the Kin Dah Lichii' Olta school perform during the Spring Parent Conference*

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