Title:
The Leadership Qualities of Cesar Chavez as Examples of the Attributes of the International Baccalaureate Organization’s Learner Profile

Lesson By:
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Grade Level/ Subject Areas:
3rd – 5th/Social Studies

Duration of Lesson:
Two 45 min. lessons

Content Standards:
P SS.3.02A Identify reasons people have formed communities, including a need for security, religious freedom, law, and material well-being.
P SS.4.18B Identify leadership qualities of state and local leaders, past and present.
P SS.5.05A Analyze various issues and events of the 20th century such as industrialization, urbanization, increased use of oil and gas, the Great Depression, the world wars, the civil rights movement, and military actions.

Lesson Abstract:
This lesson is to provide a framework for beginning to incorporate attributes defined by the Learner Profile of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme by using examples taken from the life of civil justice leader, Cesar Chavez.

Guiding Questions:
Which of Cesar Chavez’s leadership qualities are reflected in his traits and actions?
How did these traits and actions contribute to the community and social changes Chavez established?
Which of these traits can students identify in themselves?

Content Essay:
As a school embarks on the journey to establish The Primary Years Programme, its first step is to create a community of teachers and learners based on its Learner Profile. The Learner Profile defines the qualities students will need to develop in themselves in order to create a better world. The goal of the program is to nurture students to become Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-Takers, Balanced, and Reflective. In order to help students to understand what this looks like in the world, we can show how Cesar Chavez exemplified each of these traits in his own life. Jose Orosco posits, “Chavez worked all his life to establish a deeply democratic society in which ordinary people have the ability to influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives in the political, as well as economic and social spheres.” (Orosco, 4) That vision is clearly mirrored in the mission statement of the International Baccalaureate Organization.
The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” and to “encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.” (“IB learner profile, “ 2006)

Cesar Chavez was a life long learner despite the adversities he encountered and the ending of his formal schooling at the eighth grade. As an inquirer, he relentlessly pursued the knowledge he needed to successfully implement his goals to improve the lives and conditions of the farm workers. He read and pondered the works of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and St. Francis of Assisi to deepen his understanding of the power and methods of nonviolence. When he recognized pesticides as the cause of illnesses the workers exhibited he sought knowledge and confirmation. He questioned the safety of the food supply and brought this concern to the public. Working with the Community Service Organization and spending time with Father McDonnell, Chavez recognized gaps in his knowledge. He said, “I knew a lot about the work, but I didn't know anything about the economics.” (Levy, 91) So Chavez continually endeavored to build his base of knowledge as he explored factual information about agribusiness and the content of congressional hearings so that he could plan his strategies as he built the foundations for the United Farm Workers union. He investigated issues, not just of the farm workers, but also of civil rights, and later the health implications of pesticide use.

As a thinker, he used his knowledge to effectively frame the complex social problems of the poor and made ethical decisions in creating his plans and actions to resolve these problems. His use of the boycott was a timely strategy to bolster public support of the farm workers, when the lengthy Delano grape strike caused workers to become frustrated and lose hope. He recognized the power of the boycott, “Alone, the farm workers have no economic power; but with the help of the public they can develop the economic power to counter the growers.” (Levy, 201)

His ability to stay true to his belief in change through peaceful means even in the face of violence during the prolonged strike is testimony to the fact he was a principled man. When workers became frustrated and there was talk of violence and the destruction of property, he committed himself to a twenty-five day fast. The fast was not to coerce the growers, but to remind the workers of the honor of self-sacrifice for the greater benefit of others. (Orosoco, 27)

Chavez was proud of his cultural and spiritual traditions. He incorporated some of those traditions into the movement. The marches were modeled on religious pilgrimages and his fasts on his mother’s practice as well as Gandhi’s. But even though he chose to adhere to the religious practices of his childhood, he remained open-minded about others’ religious beliefs and practices. He valued diversity; the activists he gathered represented not just farm workers or Mexican workers but a broad range of ethnic and religious individuals. He believed that without such diversity, “There would be no cross-fertilization, no growing. It’s beautiful to work with other groups, other ideas, and customs.” (Orosco, 83)

Chavez exhibited his effectiveness as a communicator in multiple modes. He began with the most important aspect of communication – listening. He listened to the issues of the workers as he met with them. First individually, then in house meetings, and later in larger groups in his work with the Community Service Organization and as he built his coalition of workers to form the United Farm Workers union. Through his newspaper, speeches, marches, and boycotts, Chavez used the media to carry the message of the plight of the workers across the nation and the
globe. By sharing their stories, he garnered the support of the American public and key political and religious figures, including Senator Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Pope Paul VI.

Even as a rebellious teenager, Chavez maintained his caring nature in adverse situations. The teenage Chavez chose to wear pachuco clothes, a suit with peg legged pants and a long coat with broad shoulders, which was the style of the time. He wore them despite the fact that his mom and dad didn’t really like him wearing those clothes and that the look instilled fear in some people. Once, upon entering the driver’s license office wearing his “chucos”, a woman exclaimed, “I’d never let my son wear those! That monkey suit!” Chavez ignored the remark and went about the business of getting his license. With his mission accomplished, he noticed the woman was having difficulty getting hers and went over to help. The woman was surprised by his behavior as it was not what she expected and was impressed with his good manners. As he assisted her he met her surprise with this response, “You said something about me. I don’t care. I’m still helping you.” (Levy, 82)

Through his establishment of the union, Chavez showed his understanding of the need for balance in life. Through the union he sought to address the workers’ physical needs by getting fair wages and water and bathroom facilities in the fields. By providing services such as a death-benefit program and a credit union, he also recognized the importance of their emotional needs, a need for security.

According to Orosco, for Chavez, “The fast, first of all, was a personal act of penance with which he hoped to clear his mind and gain focus on how to better manage the organizing campaign.” (Orosco, 27) He constantly reflected on how new ideas meshed with his own. He was able to embrace many of the traditions from his culture, yet able to reject those aspects that did not fit with his philosophy of nonviolence. He regarded “machismo” as an idea that fostered violence and disregarded the value of women within the culture. His idea of courage did not depend on one taking up arms to fight, but in a different manor of laying one’s life on the line. He wanted to counter the idea that to be manly one must be willing to fight. In his words, “It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the true act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice” (Orosco, 91)

Chavez was always true to himself and his beliefs. Organizing, talking, studying was not enough, he was constantly taking actions to achieve his goals. Reaching out to others, teaching the skills needed for people to be able to become self-determined and participating agents in the continual change that is necessary to progress towards a better and more peaceful world for all of humanity.

Bibliography:


Teaching Activities/ Materials Needed:

Day One
Introduce the students to the life of Cesar Chavez through a jigsaw activity. Each group/pair of students will be given one section of the biography. They will read it and talk about it. Then a spokesperson from each group will share the important parts.  
http://chavez.cde.ca.gov/ModelCurriculum/Teachers/Lessons/Resources/Biographies/Biographical_Sketch_4thGrd.aspx

Day Two
Each group of students will get a list of the ten qualities of the Learner Profile. Each group will get a couple of scenarios from Cesar Chavez’s life. Students will decide which quality is exemplified in the scenario. (There is no one right answer.) Students then must explain how this is an example.

Each student will choose one of the qualities from the Learner Profile that she sees as strength in herself. She will outline her hand on a piece of colored tag board and write her name and the quality she has chosen on the hand. Then the student will cut out the hand and illustrate the quality. (Supplies: tag board, glue, scissors, markers or colored pencils, optional – magazines for use in creating a collage, ribbon, decorative craft items)

The completed hands will be displayed on the wall, mounted to form a circle. We will use our strengths to reach out and serve each other and our community.