## Title of Lesson:
Using Mahatma Gandhi’s Swaraj and Satyagraha Ideals in the Classroom

### Lesson By:
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### Grade Level/ Subject Areas:
Classroom Management/
appropriate for any self-
contained classroom

### Class Size:
Any size

### Time/ Duration of Lesson:
3 x 1/2 hour sessions per
week

### Goals/ Objectives of Lesson:
- Students determine and post their rights and responsibilities within the classroom community.
- Students write individual definitions of swaraj as an ideal to strive for in the classroom.
- Students write individual definitions of satyagraha as a tool to obtain a classroom governed by the principles of swaraj.
- Students resolve conflicts according to Gandhi’s principles of non-violence.

### Lesson Abstract:
Students in a self-contained class will learn about Gandhi’s methods of promoting non-violence by using it to resolve their own conflicts. They will learn about and apply swaraj, “home rule” and satyagraha, “truth- and love-force” in the classroom.

### Lesson Content:

#### Swaraj (Home Rule)

The word *swa* is Sanskrit for one’s own and the word *raj* is rule, so its literal meaning is rule over oneself. Gandhi understood this idea in two parts, a person’s internal state of being and a person’s external life in society. In trying to attain external swaraj Gandhi believed that one must first attain a certain state of being within himself.

The idea of home rule came about while the British were ruling India. Gandhi opposed how the British went about it, and he started fighting for Indian rights in the early 1900s. His struggle continued for years and India was liberated in 1948. Many Indian citizens were ready to join in the fight for their rights to rule their own country. While Gandhi agreed that India would be better off governed by Indians, he had very clear thoughts about home rule, or swaraj.

Gandhi made it clear in his autobiography that he believed that a disease should be treated at the cause or prevented. He did not agree with medicating a problem and not truly solving it. He also held this belief when it came to home rule. Removing the British from India was not enough. The belief systems of the Indians had to change so that they would be prepared to govern their own country in a way that was different from the British. Gandhi did not advocate merely changing leaders. Each individual citizen needed to go through an internal transformation.
Gandhi laid out some of his values in a way that we can learn from them. He recognized the value of all work and rejected the idea that some professions are more worthy than others. He understood that everyone needed to work to maintain his/her dignity. He believed in the value of every person, particularly in the soul. Gandhi encouraged everybody to speak his mind, regardless of his status in society. Blaming others is useless, and each person must clean up his/her own life. Action is much better than speech, and everybody must be ready to face the consequences of his/her actions. Only when a person practices what s/he preaches can s/he convince anybody with his/her words. Do not wait to see somebody else do the right thing before you do it. Do the right thing because you know it is right, and others will follow. Gandhi recorded his ideas about home rule in a book entitled *Hind Swaraj*.

Gandhi considered his values preconditions for internal swaraj. He described them as a personal belief in principles that starts from within. Scholar Joan Bondurant mentions this idea in her book *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*. “Swaraj for Gandhi is more than an object of research; it is something that has to be experienced internally, giving rise to an internal moral transformation of the individual. Without such an experience, swaraj would remain a mere theory or doctrine; it would never become an internal principle of action in the external political sphere.”

Once the people live by these values, they are ready to pursue outward swaraj. This can be accomplished by passive resistance, or soul-force or love-force.

### Satyagraha

Gandhi called his way of resolving conflicts satyagraha, grasping onto principles, truth-force, or love-force. He assumed that behind every struggle lies a deeper one. Two people have views that are true, but the people involved cannot see that they both want the same truth. Gandhi’s way of resolving conflicts through satyagraha is to have both sides discuss the issue until they can come to a resolution with which they are both happy. This often means seeking a solution to a problem that neither side thought of at first. It can also take time, and patience is required for practicing satyagraha. Through talking and thinking about the issue, people can come up with a common truth that is satisfactory and respectful to both parties.

Everyone experiences conflict throughout their lives. The conflicts can be personal (between two people) or they can be between two groups of people. They can occur between a group of workers and their boss. They can also happen between a government and the people of a country.

There are many ways to resolve conflicts. Some are effective, some are not. Some are respectful of the people involved, some are not. Some ways include peaceful solutions, and some include violent solutions.

Gandhi used restorative justice to resolve conflicts. He realized that the way that a conflict is resolved directly influences the state of being after the conflict. Gandhi was in conflict with the British government for ruling India and not allowing the Indians to govern themselves. He realized that if the Indians used violence to resolve their problem India would become a violent country.
Gandhi also maintained good relationships with the people with whom he was in conflict. He lived in South Africa for twenty-one years because he fought for the rights of the Indians who lived there. The Indians experienced racial discrimination and the Dutch who ruled South Africa at that time controlled the laws. Jan Christian Smuts was the Minister of Finance and Defense. Gandhi would always contact him to try and work out a problem through discussion. When this did not work he would contact General Smuts when he was planning acts of civil disobedience and, as a result, they became friends. General Smuts often ordered that Gandhi would be put into jail, but the two communicated closely throughout all of this period. Gandhi made a pair of sandals for the general during one of his prison sentences, and gave them to him as a gift. Later in his life when Gandhi was famous all over the world for his peaceful way of resisting the British in India, General Smuts sent the sandals back to Gandhi with a note that said, “I am no longer big enough to walk in these shoes.”

Classroom Example

Julia and Francesca both notice a pencil on the floor. After seeing it for the third day in a row, Julia picks it up. Both girls assume that it was left there because nobody wanted it, so each assumes it is rightfully hers.

There are several ways to resolve this. Francesca, who is athletic and clearly stronger than Julia, can force her to give her the pencil. This may resolve the issue for Francesca, but Julia will not feel at peace. The class can hold a meeting to hear both sides of the problem. A resolution may be reached, but the truth of the loser’s side is often neglected in this process. The girls could agree to share the pencil, reaching a compromise. This solution may feel fair, but both girls need to give something up in the process.

If the girls use satyagraha, they will search for a solution that encompasses both of their truths. Possibly they decide to donate the pencil to a lost and found area where it can be used by anyone who is without one. Maybe they decide to use their recess time to scavenge the school for abandoned pencils. The girls may need time to think about this. Maybe they will go home, talk through the situation with their families, sleep on it and present their ideas the next day. Maybe they will decide to create a school shop where anyone can come to buy a pencil at a great price. They are now working together to create something that is theirs.

The following need to be present for effective satyagraha:

- Trust – all parties need to have faith that they are working together for a common goal.
- Sacrifice – each party must be prepared to give up his ideas in order to see someone else’s.
- Spirituality – everyone is working for a common good.
- Simplicity – keep it simple, only include others that are necessary.
- Non-violence – in the mind, body, and spirit (this includes being on time, listening to others, being assertive, but not aggressive).
- Respect – embracing and celebrating differences.
- Needs vs. Wants – be very clear which is which.

PA State Content Standards:
PA State Standards for Family and Consumer Services 11.2.6 Grade 6
A. Contrast the solutions reached through the use of a simple decision making process that includes analyzing consequences of alternative solutions against snap decision making methods.
C. Classify the component of effective teamwork and leadership.
H. Describe positive and negative interactions within patterns of interpersonal communications; placating, blaming, distracting, intellectualizing, asserting

PA State Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening 1.6.5 Grade 5
A. Listen to others.
   • Ask pertinent questions.
   • Distinguish relevant information, ideas and opinions from those that are irrelevant.
   • Take notes when prompted.
D. Contribute to discussions.
   • Ask relevant questions.
   • Respond with relevant information or opinions to questions asked.
   • Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
   • Adjust involvement to encourage equitable participation.
   • Give reasons for opinions.
   • Summarize, when prompted.

Guiding Questions:
• What is an effective, non-violent way of resolving conflicts?
• What is my individual role in promoting peace?
• How can I promote peace in my school, my community, and my country?

Lesson Context:
This lesson is one of several in a unit to build a classroom community at the beginning of the school year. During this time students set up rights and responsibilities in the classroom and guidelines for class meetings are clarified. These are used for the rest of the school year. The class then decides on a protocol to follow if a member of the classroom community does not follow the classroom guidelines. This protocol is based on Gandhi’s ideals and the students’ ideas of how to implement them into our classroom routines. This study of satyagraha will replace a unit on conflict resolution skills. The students will use satyagraha to resolve conflicts as they arise.

Teaching Activities:
• Read Gandhi (by Demi) out loud to the class.
• Students gather in a circle for class meeting. The meeting begins with a few minutes of silence, and then the teacher gives direct instruction on swaraj. Students can ask questions and enter into the discussion as they feel moved.
• Once swaraj is discussed, each student will write a definition to show her/his understanding. They will then follow the same process for Satyagraha.
• When the class community demonstrates an understanding of these terms, the students will define a process for resolving conflicts according to the ideals of swaraj and satyagraha. They will work in small groups and then present their ideas to the rest of the class.
- Students will watch the documentary *Making of the Mahatma*
- The students will hear real examples of conflicts between two students and, in pairs, role-play how they would resolve them. During this role-play they will swap roles in order to understand the role of the other person. The students will better grasp and learn as the examples are real and practical to them.
- The students will hear an example of a conflict between a group of people and a person in authority. As a group they will discuss how to come to a resolution and design an action plan.
- When students are in conflict they will work out their differences using satyagraha. The situation may require a discussion between the people involved, mediation by the teacher, or a class meeting to help the involved students. The people in conflict will determine the format.

**Assessment/ Evaluation:**
Narrative in student evaluation (social comment)
Students’ definitions of swaraj and satyagraha

**Bibliography (these are also good references for teachers):**

**References for Students:**