Title of Lesson: Nonviolence and Conflict: Its Importance to Building Community

Lesson By: Laura Mullen

Grade Level/Subject Areas:
Early Elementary School (Grades 2-5)
Health-Social/Emotional

Class Size:
Could be done for any class size

Time/Duration of Lesson:
90 minutes (can be referred back to and extended for several days)

Guiding Questions:
• What does it mean to be nonviolent?
• Why is nonviolence important to our community?
• What are the different types of and how can we resolve conflicts?

Lesson Abstract:
This lesson will clarify the true meaning of nonviolence and teach the values associated with nonviolence. Students will become familiar with the Six Steps of Nonviolence and Six Principles of Nonviolence as put forth by Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolence and conflict should be addressed together, therefore students will learn the different types and levels of conflict. Discussion will be given to negative and positive peace and what that means to our community.

Lesson Content:
Non-violence is not just the opposite of violence. It is true that non-violence is the absence of violence but nonviolence (without a hyphen) is the absence of violence with action to make a change. Nonviolence is rooted in unity, cooperation, and collaboration. Changing minds and uniting hearts is the aim of nonviolence. Nonviolence has a place in all major religions but it is important to note that you do not need to be religious to be nonviolent. Humanity has values that do not need to be related to religion. For instance kindness and compassion are values that some people have that are not because of their religion. It is a belief or value they live their life by regardless of whether or not religion is present in their lives.

Nonviolence consists of a set of values that set the path for a nonviolent life. Courage, compassion, truth, trust, fearlessness, forgiveness, service/selflessness, and self-restraint are all values of a nonviolent life. Mohandas Gandhi believed that nonviolence means you are willing to die but not to kill. Although he did not believe in war you should not be a coward and run away, it is your duty to defend your nation. He believed in
compromises and understood (by learning) what brings people together and what pulls them apart.

Martin Luther King, Jr. created Six Steps to Nonviolence along with Six Principles of Nonviolence. The six steps are as follows:

- **Step 1** - Information Gathering (understanding the problem)
- **Step 2** - Education (this includes the victims)
- **Step 3** - Personal Commitment (everyone needs a motto to live by)
- **Step 4** - Negotiation (need to win the opponent over - win-win situation)
- **Step 5** - Direct Action (this is used when negotiations break down)
- **Step 6** - Reconciliation (the problem is solved by bringing forces together in a new relationship)

The Six Principles of Nonviolence are as follows:

- **Principle 1** - Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
  - It is a positive force confronting the forces of injustice.

- **Principle 2** - The beloved community is the goal (we must find the good in each other).
  - The nonviolent concept is an overall effort to achieve a reconciled world by raising the level of relationships among people to a height where justice prevails.

- **Principle 3** - Attack forces of evil, not persons doing evil (what makes the person do what they are doing)
  - The nonviolent approach helps one analyze the fundamental conditions of conflict rather than reacting to one’s opponents.

- **Principle 4** - Accept suffering without retaliation for the sake of the cause to achieve a goal
  - Self-chosen suffering is redemptive and helps the movement grow in a spiritual and humanitarian way.

- **Principle 5** - Avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as external physical violence
  - The nonviolent attitude permeates all aspects.

- **Principle 6** - The universe is on the side of justice (justice will ultimately prevail)
  - Truth is universal and each human being is oriented to the just sense of order of the universe. *(Lecture by Bernard Lafayette, Jr. at Cal. Poly. Pomona, July 20, 2009)*

The world is not violence free so the need to be informed about the different types of conflict is important in the study of nonviolence. You must identify the conflict before you can start to resolve it. There are four (4) major types of conflict. There is Pathway Conflict, which is when people have the same overall goals but have different methods for reaching them. This type of conflict usually depends on values. Another type of
conflict is Mutually Exclusive Conflict. In this scenario there are different goals but the people choose to function together. In the Distributive Conflict there are not enough resources for everyone so the question becomes who will get what. Finally in Value Conflict people have different values and a different vision. This kind of conflict is present in most conflict.

The level of conflict can vary and it is important to recognize the level in order to solve the conflict. At the normal level of conflict people are disagreeing, but they are still having a conversation. People are calm during the discussion and this kind of conflict is healthy. To keep conflict at this level you must learn how to disagree constructively. When conflict is pushed beyond the normal level it is called pervasive. This conflict is full of tension and could erupt in physical violence. People are standing not sitting and are no longer listening. A “third party” needs to step in to help people bring the focus back to the real issue. The most serious level of conflict is overt. This level of conflict becomes out of control and emotions have little to do with the original conflict. People will be shouting and there will also be physical contact made at this level. As in the pervasive level, a “third party” is needed to prevent the parties from hurting themselves or each other. The people need to be separated and a cooling down period is necessary. It is important to remember that no conflicts can be solved at the pervasive or overt levels. The goal should be to get all those involved back to the normal level before conflict reconciliation can begin.

Nonviolence is not only in action but also in speech (what you say), thought (what you think), and writing (what you write). People need to take positive social action in order to persuade others to do the right thing. Social justice will help others improve the community nonviolently. There are two (2) kinds of peace. Negative peace is peace without justice. In this scenario everything appears peaceful but there is still injustice happening in the community. Positive peace on the other hand is peace with the presence of justice. If all the children are playing on the playground in what appears to be a peaceful picture but there are children off to the side being left out then this is a negative peace. It is negative because there is not justice for all.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. told of the true meaning of nonviolence with this quote, “Nonviolence is power, but it is the right and good use of power. Constructively it can save the white man as well as the Negro…Only through our adherence to nonviolence—which also means love in its strong and commanding sense—will the fear in the white community be mitigated.” (Carson, page 330)

State Content Standards:
Massachusetts State Content Frameworks: Strand 2 Health
Standard: Interpersonal Relationships, Social, and Emotional Health

121 CPH 7.1: Explain why communication is essential in human relationships and identify people from whom children can learn how to communicate, such as family members, friends, community members, and members of faith-based groups.
122 CPH 7.2: Apply both verbal and non-verbal communication skills to develop positive relationships and improve the social environment of the school.

123 CPH 7.3: Describe the concept of friendship and contrast qualities that strengthen or weaken a friendship, including the importance of sound character in interacting with each other.

124 CPH 7.4: Describe the concepts of prejudice and discrimination.

Materials Needed:
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Large white paper
- Mural paper
- Book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles

Suggested Teaching Activities:
1. Write the word “nonviolence” on the board and ask the students to draw a picture of what they think would represent nonviolence. When completed have students share their interpretation of nonviolence.
2. Share the values of nonviolence and ask students to share why they think those values are important for a nonviolent community.
3. Begin discussing the value of courage by reading *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles. In a whole group discuss the question-in what ways has Ruby’s strength and courage affected our lives?
4. Students will begin the creation of a mural by drawing a picture or writing a word that describes courage. *Note-As other values are studied they will be added to the mural in a similar way.

Bibliography:


