Ahimsa Center K-12 Lesson Plan

Title: Growing Through Change: Rights Without Responsibility

Lesson By: Melba Neal

Grade Level/Subject Areas: Science /Health /Writing /Art /Music (Social Justice)

Duration of Lesson:
This lesson is designed to be taught 60 minutes, over a period of 7 instructional days.

California State/Common Core Standards:
State Standards: Science: 2. All organisms need energy and matter to live and grow. a. Students know plants are the primary source of matter and energy entering the food chain.
Common Core Health: 1.3.N Describe the relationship between food intake, physical activity, and good health. 7.3.N Identify ways to establish and maintain healthy eating practices consistent with current research-based guidelines for a nutritionally balanced diet.
Common Core Writing: 2. Write informative/explanatory text to examine a topic and convey ideas and inform it.
Common Core Visual Arts: 2.8 Use complementary colors in an original composition to show contrast and emphasis.

Lesson Abstract
This lesson is presenting students with an authentic opportunity to learn and practice the principles of constructive work (as described in Hind Swaraj (Parel, 2013)) that allows them to be informed of, and/or exercise their duty as individuals. They will become a “caregiver” with a responsibility of caring for a plant from planting the seed (the start) to transferring the plant to the school garden (the finish). Their rights are consistent with what would be called “proper conduct” – how to properly care for and grow a plant. This process will show an example of students operating within their Rights with Responsibility.

Guiding Questions (3)
1. What would be an example of “rights without responsibility”? 
2. Using the example from above, would “rights with responsibility” look any different? How would you describe the difference?
3. What benefit is produced when we exercise our rights by taking on a responsibility?

Content Essay
Growing Through Change – Learning from Rights without Responsibility

M. K. Gandhi is still honored as a prominent pioneer in the development of nonviolent social change. Martin Luther King, Caesar Chavez, and Nelson Mandela were all influenced by the teachings of this remarkable man. His life work focused on transforming his life into one that worked for not only himself, but for the good of all. His work reflects the continual use of the events of his life as a laboratory to experiment with using a variety of methods to study and
implement nonviolent social change. He is most remembered for his leadership in the achievement of “swaraj” for his native country with the commitment of its people.

Through transformation of each person, by enlivening the moral conscience within them, by their choice, change becomes inevitable. The type of individual transformation that is spoken of here is what sets the stage for like-minded people of all ages to work together in a variety of ways. Enlightenment is not forced upon anyone. It is important to recognize that each individual has the responsibility to make the choice to accept his duty to come to terms with his moral conscience through knowing the Truth, and each must own it (duty established in Truth) as their very own. When these realizations of self-knowledge and self-reflection begin to take place they are the seeds of change. This begins the process of our growth through change.

Gandhi understood that realizing change was not necessarily a quick process, but it was a well thought out plan that had been searched and tried in his heart and mind beforehand, to anticipate all of the possibilities that could occur. By assuming what might occur as actions in response to acts of civil disobedience, he was able to plan for appropriate extensions to the experiment that might lead into the next step toward realizing “swaraj”. On some occasions, he recognized when there had not been enough preparation, or he was sensitive to the idea that “this is not the time” to continue the original plan, and he would sometimes find it necessary to modify plans to fit the needs required to reach the desired goal. A very liberating thought is that in the background of his process, Gandhi retreated into the silence to listen and hear what he must do.

Just prior to his death, a published list of observations called “The Seven Social Sins, or The Seven Blunders of the World”, was entrusted to his grandson, Arun Gandhi (Wikipedia). It is believed that, having worked so closely with his grandfather, aware of the scope of his experiments, and the continuing social miscalculations he must have observed from the industrialized ruling civilizations, Arun was compelled to add yet another blunder. The blunders now number …Seven +1. The additional blunder that is of significance for this lesson is “rights without responsibility”. We will begin by taking a look at the principles that make this statement ring true, before we reverse them to see the benefit in their “re-interpretation”. We will focus on useful opportunities to recognize the need for individual responsibility, a requirement to securing the individual rights we deserve.

Gandhi believed in establishing a strong foundation that is made up of moral principles of truth, and it must be nonviolent. He also believed and taught that moral values guide all aspects of human life, including politics. Gandhi’s truth included the well-being of every human being. “In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?” (Gandhi) Finally, there is duty, something that could be defined as required by one's religion, job, position or the laws … service, especially military service, which influenced Gandhi as he engaged in all of the aforementioned ideas.

As we begin our activities, students will be introduced to a more complete understanding of the important principles that Gandhi lived by. Through this study, they will be able to create new neural pathways that expose and draw them closer to learning how to exercise their will under their own self-control, instead of repeating possible past, mindless behaviors.
Gandhi’s vision was a vision of freedom. Freedom from terror, coercion, and of choice of a pathway which would lead one to operate in the interest of all by being an example, which is the ultimate aim, the ultimate change. The vision would be considered achieved as each individual learned to rule themselves through self-discipline, self-restraint, and self-control over their own individual desires, cravings, or passions. When we look at the statement “rights without responsibility”, this is considered a failing, a sort of poison, which requires an antidote that is based upon applying natural principles or ethics as the remedy.

When one takes responsibility, they take the opportunity to be consistent with what we will call “proper conduct” (answerable, or accountable for something within one's power, control). Rights, our legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement, cannot be justifiably expected to be given to us without our first taking responsibility.

In our experiment, we will look at this blunder in reverse –
1. What would “rights with responsibility” look like? What benefit would be produced when we exercise our rights by taking on the duty of a responsibility?

Constructive work was one of Gandhi’s greatest tools used to achieve “swaraj”. Constructive work requires the use of individuals driven by their sense of duty (their task or service obligation) to act by taking responsibility which expects them to be accountable for their actions, which will entitle them to expect that their rights are to be honored. (Rights with Responsibility)

As Social Justice Agents of Change, we have a wonderful example from Gandhi’s life of how we can use nonviolent methods to bring about lasting change beginning with ourselves, each as an individual, a part of the whole “one” of us. Through accepting our responsibility to become accountable for our individual power, our lives will become examples of how each of us can make positive changes that affect our collective future for the better.

We will look at the idea of a seed as a metaphor. The seed is complete and has all that it needs to perform its purpose. Students will exercise their duty to set the seed free to be able to change by planting it in a medium that will support its transformation, soil. The seed is equipped to do the work which results from its transformation into the first phase of its growth. As the seed opens the exterior falls away leaving an activated core, the sprout. As the sprout pushes itself to the surface, we can recognize it because it bears the look or characteristics of its “kind”. Those who recognize it know it for what it is, and it is complete, distinct.

Growing the seed is a form of work that benefits from one taking responsibility for its growth needs created after the seed takes on its new phase of life. The work being done is assisting in the process of The Life Cycle: the need for water, sun, and air. Later, as the plant continues to grow it may have different needs, such as repotting if/when necessary, harvesting of the fruit or vegetable, paying it forward through new seeds or seedlings to grow other plants, decomposition, and adding nutrients through composting to future plants.

Let’s revisit that analogy. We are the seed, complete with everything required within us to process through our life cycle. Our only need is the proper environment to sustain healthy conditions for growing. Our transformation can be likened to the seed going into the ground and
transforming from its life as an idea, and becoming an expression of the idea in tangible form (words, thoughts, actions, deeds) centered within the knowledge of morally conscious thinking that connects with our root, our soul, or our soul-force. As we break forth into a new awareness, we are nurtured by the truth in those around us who have also become their greater selves.

Duty plays its role in both the physical seed’s life and the individual person’s life. Being enlightened, we must act in the behalf of the seed or the person to assist with the truth we know to be important to the development of that one, the one which is a part of the whole “one” of us. It becomes our responsibility to share and support that one that they may be able to enhance another of like mind or entice one by their example. As the plant delivers itself, it then has the “right”, freedom or entitlement to keep repeating the process, creating more plants that serve to sustain life. We, too, deliver ourselves to the world, a transforming idea expressed. By the same token, we earned the right, freedom or entitlement to keep repeating our process, rippling out in oceanic circles, one drop at a time. With our learning, we endeavor to “live simply that others may simply live” (Kaushik).

Lesson Activities
Rights without Responsibility
Students will be introduced to Gandhi through the use of oral retelling of short stories about his life and the experiments that brought him to transformation, and to accept certain truths that were essential to his achievement of nonviolent social change. Time will be taken to investigate Gandhi, and gain a sense of his values in certain areas of his life. From this understanding, we will begin making connections to how this can apply to us through the life of a seed growing to a plant.

A large portion of this project will take place at home. This is important because the lesson students are being taught is to ask themselves, “How would I take care of this plant?” Each person is different, and will be encouraged to complete the task as they see fit. The directions are intended to be general. They receive instruction on what needs to be done to start the plant, and each student will be responsible to search for/locate information from any appropriate source that tells them how to care for a seed growing into a plant. There will be a control plant in the classroom used as the example for planting the seed. Students will be introduced to how to sprout a bean in a plastic bag, and then transfer it to a clear plastic cup after it begins to grow. (All students will experience this.)

Rights without Responsibility vs. Rights with Responsibility
My Responsibility: My Plant – Each student will grow their own plant, keep a journal, and report its daily growth progress – (Rights w/o Responsibility)

A. Introduce the growth cycle of plants. Read the story, Jack’s Garden by Henry Cole, to introduce the garden project to the class. (Or view http://www.slideshare.net/mouch1gm/the-life-cycle-of-a-plant) Discuss what students know about gardens already using the questions below. Record information on chart paper.

Questions:
1. What are the steps needed to cause a plant to grow?
2. Where do seeds come from? Can seeds come from anywhere else?
3. Why are seeds necessary? Could we get a plant from any other source? Would it still produce the same plant?
4. What do you think is going to happen to your seed? Why do you feel that way? What would you think if you planted a carrot seed, and your plant grew a tomato?
5. Do you see any relationships that exist in our lives that are similar to seeds? If so, what relationship do you see? If not, why not?

B. Students will grow a vegetable plant at their home.
Instructions to Students:
1. Today, we will be planting seeds to grow plants. We will use some physical supplies to grow our plants. Our plant will be a vegetable plant, and we will be using seeds to grow them.
2. Choose a few (2-3) seeds to plant from the cup marked with the seed you choose. Get a potting cup (write your name on it), a scoop of soil, make a plant marker using a Popsicle stick. (Choices: 2 types of tomatoes, two types of carrots, and 2 types of green peas.)
3. There are general things that we do to help a seed grow. What are the requirements for growing the seed you have chosen? (Example: Look for the instructions for how to care for your plant on the package, or the internet, etc.) You may use any resource you have available at home, school, or the library.
4. Plant the seeds according to the instructions you located. Keep a record of the steps in your journal to document the process.
5. Journal about the status of the plant each day. (What does the soil look like? Can you see the plant yet? How many leaves does it have?)
6. Make a drawing of the progress of the plant as it grows, and record what you observe happening in the Garden Journal.
(Special Note: This is the main part of the lesson, and it will be very important to reinforce the principles of Gandhi that were emphasized by his life work (the information that relates to his life that will be read in the stories from the preliminary work leading up to the teaching of the lesson.) The metaphor of the seed ties the students to the possibility of thinking new ways about who they are, and what they are capable of becoming and doing. While proceeding through the lesson, the connections must be charted and reviewed along the way.)

C. Oral Reflection on the study of rights, responsibility, duty, and discovery of the antidote.
Introduction and Reflection on the vocabulary words: see italicized words above.
1. Students will be divided up into 6 groups. (4-5 students)
   a. Talk amongst themselves as to the meaning of the words
   b. Record a meaning that the majority agreed upon on chart paper:
      word – definition
   c. Draw an illustration of the words that were defined.
   d. Take pictures of the plants that students bring back to school to share during our discussion period. Plants will be transplanted into the school garden, and maintained there.
2. Student groups will be asked to reflect (in writing) on the growth process of their plants, and what they found out from taking responsibility for its growth and development.
   a. How did you show responsibility while you were growing your plant? What did “showing responsibility” look like?
   b. What was your duty while growing the plant? Did you perform your duty? Explain.
c. What were your rights as the owner/grower of your plant?

3. Now let’s think about your task. Were you pleased with how your plant grew? Were you responsible? Did you exercise your rights as a “grower”? Did you do your duty? Did you care for it well? If you could change something you did to help you to become a more responsible person, what would you want to change? Why would making that particular change, make you a better person? Is change a hard thing to do? Why do you feel that way?

a. In a group composed of the entire class, students will be given the opportunity to discuss the questions above.

(Special Note: There is no expectation to have them actually change anything immediately. But, the real purpose is to plant the seed of possibility of change. By remaining aware that although the seed is not visible beneath the soil of transformation, at any time it could break through the surface and produce its “shoot”, while continuing to nurture its process on a day to day basis.)

Bibliography

Materials Needed
Stories of Gandhi’s Life to contemplate (Various)
Chart Paper Pad
Markers, red, yellow, blue, green, black, purple
total Clear Plastic Drinking cups, 6 oz.
Journals (manila) for home documentation
2 packages of vegetable seeds – for 3 types of vegetables, using a different variety of see:
Carrots, green peas, and/or tomatoes
Potting Soil
Popsicle stick
60 sheets of drawing paper to paste in journals
Craft glue
Crayons
Color Pencils