Ahimsa Center K-12 Lesson Plan

Title: Come Dance With Me: Classroom Management Based in the Gandhian Principles of the Oceanic Circle

By: Catherine M. Nelson Twentynine Palms Elementary School, Twentynine Palms, CA

Lesson Length: Intro 300 min (15 min/day for 4 weeks) followed by every day for the school year in classroom; ½ hr Introduction to parents at Back to School Night, with updates/review in weekly newsletters.

Relevant (K) Common Core Standards:

**English Language Arts and Literacy**

**Foundational Skills**

PC1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
   - b. Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
   - c. Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.

**Writing**

TTP2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

TTP3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

**Speaking and Listening**

CC1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
   - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
   - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.

CC2a. Understand and follow one- and two-step oral directions. CA

CC3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

CC6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

PKI 4. Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

CSE1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CSE1f. Produce and expand complete sentences in shared language activities.

CSE2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

VA6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

**Mathematics: Geometry**

**Identify and describe shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons, cubes, cones, cylinders, and spheres).**

1. Describe objects in the environment using names of shapes, and describe the relative positions of these objects using terms such as above, below, beside, in front of, behind, and next to.
2. Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.
3. Identify shapes as two-dimensional (lying in a plane, “flat”) or three-dimensional (“solid”).

**Analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes.**

4. Analyze and compare two- and three-dimensional shapes, in different sizes and orientations, using informal language to describe their similarities, differences, parts (e.g., number of sides and vertices/“corners”) and other attributes (e.g., having sides of equal length).
Lesson Abstract: This lesson provides a background of Gandhi’s principles in the Oceanic circle, and provides suggestions for using those principles as the base for classroom management.

Guiding Questions:
1. How are Gandhi’s principles of the Oceanic Circle applicable to classroom management?
2. What are the individual and collective responsibilities in a classroom community?
3. How is classroom management connected to Gandhi’s practice of nonviolence?

Content Essay:

Love
Everyone
Attitude
Respect
Nonviolence

The title, Dance with Me implies sarvodaya or working for the welfare of all, the awakening of all, as well as knowing the greater good won’t be realized without all wanting to work together. For Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1947), nonviolence wasn’t simply no violence, nor was it simply a change of attitude. Practicing nonviolence meant a change of heart. Being nonviolent meant a transformation from within. Being nonviolent isn’t a convenience, but is a way of life. (Sethia, 2012; Parel, 2009)

Using the word, LEARN and the acrostic words formed, we grow into the Gandhian principles of the Oceanic Circle, which were expressed in a 1946 interview with Gandhi (Parel, 2009). This brief interview gives us 3 keys for building a classroom and school community:

1. As individuals, we are responsible to ourselves, our families, and our class.
2. As a class, we are responsible to our school.
3. As a school, we are responsible to our community.

As simple and sensible as those seem, the difficulty comes in principle living, not just believing if we follow them on occasion, it will be fine. Gandhi found as he communicated with the people of India about becoming independent from the British rule of the time, many didn’t desire self rule, or swaraj by itself, but wanted to rule themselves under the established colonial rule. Gandhi felt that was a rule for the select in India who were comfortable under British rule, and did nothing for the farmers and villagers needing self-reliance. (Sethia, 2012) In the same manner, if we as a school are directing behavior and rewarding that which is good, many students will never grasp the sense of self-responsibility in words and actions. And those comfortable with the system will seldom be challenged to step out and see what else they can do to be active members of the community. Self-rule means self-responsibility to the whole.

Love For Gandhi, national swaraj and individual swaraj meant living in self, and with one another. It meant caring enough for yourself to care for others more. Love is not about wants, but about compassion, and justice. One learns to view life from the inside out, with heart transformation to know what is right and just. (Sethia, 2012, Shadyac, 2011). The majority of our
students come to school with open, loving hearts. We need to continue supporting that openness and love through acknowledging the goodness and recognizing actions (e.g. Thank you for sharing. Thank you for waiting your turn), and feelings. For those, who for whatever circumstance don’t know or feel love, the responsibility of the individual and community is to show love through compliments, kindness and empathy.

Everyone In the last decade, science has taken a turn away from the belief humans belong to a species separate from the rest of the ecosystem. More and more research is showing we are connected to each other, and to all species of the world. Humans are actually wired for a compassionate response to one another, and not a solo existence that says, “I am significant at the expense of others.” (Shadyac, 2011) As hard as it is to grasp, our core beings desire communion with one another, not competition. A review of Darwin’s work showed he mentions survival of the fittest two times, and love ninety-five times. (Shadyac, 2011). Gandhi wanted a free India in which all were equal, no matter the job, or perceived place in life. He felt each individual was an important part of the whole community. Gandhi intuitively knew of the connectedness between all species, and desired *ahimsa*, (nonviolence), for all on the planet. (Sethia, 2012, Parel, 2009) In the classroom we share with one another during the day. We learn mindfulness of self to be mindful of those around us. We create a safe learning environment for each student to be a part of the class.

**Attiude** Gandhi knew his principles in the oceanic circle needed to be internalized by the individual and lived every day. In turn, those same principles needed to be internalized and lived by the community as a whole. The desire for swaraj (self rule, freedom) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence) requires an internal change of heart. (Sethia, 2011) Studies are showing the existence of a “heart magnetic field to the body.” (Shadyac, 2011) This magnetic field connects us to each other, and helps us feel the emotions of self, and one another. Instead of separation to one another, we are led to feelings of empathy, compassion, and love for each other. In the classroom we model the attitude of the heart through sharing responsibilities, and listening. We encourage politeness and sensitivity to others by walking down hallways with little noise, and by using conversation voices in the cafeteria.

**Respect** “Being open to each other’s point of view is of course the hallmark of a true *satagrahi*” (or one who insists on the truth). (lxii, Parel, 2009) Gandhi welcomed dialogue, and respected himself enough to admit when he made a mistake. In 1919, the British passed the Roulette Law allowing for punishment of any Indians involved in protesting deplorable conditions in India due to WWI costs to the country. Gandhi called for a nationwide hartal (cessation of all economic activities) March 30, and April 6 of 1919. While the initial protest was successful, there were some acts of violence in protest of the law. When Gandhi heard of the violence by members of his country, he called off the hartal, stating his mistake was in not training the people fully in satyagraha (insistence in truth, firmness in a true cause) before asking them to participate in it. (p. 88-89, Sethia, 2012) He also had enough respect for himself to put his protest plans before the British time and time again to allow dialogue, and hopefully compromise before protest and *ahimsa* actions. (Sethia, 2012). He also had courage to change perspective on issues, and to openly admit his change of view. Gandhi also believed in protesting the system, and not the person. (Sethia, 2012, Hempel, 1989). He also knew respect had to come from within individuals, and only worked if through example, individuals were taught what respect is. In the classroom we show respect by taking turns, speaking kindly to one another, completing assignments, cleaning up after ourselves, and listening to one another. We model positive actions on the playground for students to be kind to one another while playing.
Nonviolence In his lifetime, Gandhi experienced or witnessed acts of violence for personal or national gain. Early in his career travels he was asked to move from sitting in first class with a paid ticket to third class on the train. When he attempted to discuss his paid fare, he was thrown off the train. When he and his family attempted to return to South Africa in 1896, the ships were not allowed to dock because false rumors were spread of Indians, led by Gandhi, planning an attack on the area. European businessmen were upset with some of Gandhi’s writings and had false rumors spread about the people traveling in the boats. When the boats were finally allowed to dock after three weeks of harassment and threats while on the boats, Gandhi was met by an angry mob and severely beaten. (p. 32-33, Sethia, 2012) Gandhi also believed revenge for the sake of revenge and personal gain was more harmful than passive resistance. In revenge one disturbs personal peace, and perpetuates the cycle of violence (Parel, 2009, Kumar, 2004). He realized the only way to lasting, meaningful swaraj (self-rule, freedom) was through ahimsa (nonviolence). And the only way to ahimsa is through each individual turning away from beliefs, thoughts, and actions that will harm another. In the classroom we model nonviolence through listening, compromising, and gentleness with one another and any creatures in and around our room.

At first glance, having classroom management based in the Gandhian Principles of the Oceanic Circle seems too simple. The complexity comes in consistent practice, and willingness of students, home, and school to actively participate.

Bibliography

Teaching Activities:
Each day for 4 weeks, the acronym for LEARN will be explained, modeled and supported with practical examples.
After the initial four week explanation and examples, the Oceanic Principles will be the used for classroom management during the school year.
Plan will also be explained to parents at Back To School Night. (Sheet attached)

Materials:
Colored circles to match the acrostic words in LEARN.
Holders on the circles for the colored slips of paper.
The word, LEARN and acrostic words written out and posted on the wall.
Parent Explanation Letter (Included)
**WHAT IS IT?**
The Gandhian Principles of the Oceanic Circle were expressed in a 1946 interview with Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1947). This brief interview gives us 3 keys for building a classroom community:

1. As individuals, we are responsible to ourselves, our families, and our class.
2. As a class, we are responsible to our school.
3. As a school, we are responsible to our community.

**WHY USE THESE PRINCIPLES?**
1. Responsibility starts with the individual. Being mindful of oneself and others is an important piece of a child’s development.
2. Being mindful of ourselves encourages us to be helpful to others in our families, our class, and our school.
3. Being mindful of others encourages us to be a caring part of our larger community.

**HOW WILL THESE PRINCIPLES BE USED IN OUR CLASSROOM?**
1. Our class will have the word, LEARN posted on the wall as an acrostic. Each new word in the acrostic will be posted on a circle. Each colored circle will have matching colored slips in a holder on the circle.
2. Each day, students will mindfully pick one slip of paper for each word they feel they have shown during the day.
3. We will have sharing circle in the morning, and in the afternoon to discuss what slips each has, and why.
4. We will have a telling circle on Fridays for students to share what they saw in their classmates during the week (this will take time to develop well).

**WHAT CAN YOU DO AT HOME TO HELP?**
1. Students will take the slips home daily to share with you how they showed our class words during the day at school. *Please help by rewarding with conversation, not token things for good behavior.*