Title: Map of Gandhian Principles

Lesson By:
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Grade Level/ Subject Areas:
This presentation is designed to provide professional staff development for adult learners. Gandhi’s principles can be applied to their personal lives, professional work and/or school community.

Abstract:
The image of a tree is used to map Gandhi’s principles in relation to each other. The reader is encouraged to study the principles, and use this map as a guide to explore one’s personal and communal landscapes.

Guiding Questions:
What are Gandhi’s concepts of satyagraha, ahimsa, swaraj, constructive work and sarvodaya?
How do these principles interrelate?
How might you use this map in your personal life? School community? Local community?

Content Essay:
While much literature exists regarding Gandhi’s essential principles of Satyagraha (Soul force), Ahimsa (nonviolence), Swaraj (freedom), constructive work (daily local works of justice), and Sarvodaya (wellbeing for all), it is more challenging to find in one place, a description of all these principles and their relationship to each other. For this reason, I am attempting to make a map of these 5 Gandhian principles and suggest general ways they are interrelated. It is hoped that this map can act as a tool to help one navigate through the world on an individual and communal level. Before beginning, it is important to remind ourselves of the potential dangers that commonly occur in using and making maps. While many of us have had the experience of being lost because we did not have a map to guide us, we have also found ourselves lost because we became so absorbed in the map that we forget to read the landscape itself! A map of Gandhian principles must be interactive, meaning, in constant dialogue with one’s experience. Gandhi’s whole life appeared to be a series of experiments and he understood moral principles as useless unless they are engaged with the experience of daily life. “Some friends have told me that truth and nonviolence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along.” (Gandhi, Harijan, November 12, 1938 cited in Ahimsa, or the Way of Nonviolence, 1992).

The image of a tree has been chosen to illustrate Gandhi’s principles, since a tree is a living dynamic organism in the world with interrelated parts. The scale of this map is large. The reader is encouraged to zoom in to examine for themselves the greater details regarding how principles interface with one’s experience. Inevitably new connections will form between these
concepts. Revising the map is essential as this wisdom grows beyond the given guide. This process of experimentation draws us into Gandhi’s way of embodying ethics in the world, grounding ideals in experience, uniting his morality and reality. Once orienting the map and locating oneself on the landscape, one can plot out a path towards a desired destination and take informed action.

**Professional Staff Development:**
Begin with music video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA)
Refer to the tree model as the following map of Gandhian principles is explained...

**Soil of Experience**
The soil in which the tree is rooted represents our human experience in the world. It contains our past and present experiences of everyday life and the cultural, religious, familial, social, economic and political systems that surround us. Take some time to reflect upon your own soil. Pass out a simple drawing of a tree (with soil line, roots, trunk, branches).

**Engagement with adult learners:** Write down or draw the essential systems, cultures, experiences that have formed who you are as an individual. Share with a partner. Discuss with the large group, the importance of knowing your own soil. What implications could this have on a staff, classroom or school community level?

**Satyagraha ~ Soul Force**
“Satyagraha, or “soul force”, is a term Gandhi used to embody the whole spirit and ethical imperative of his movement.” (p.47, Sethia, 2012)

Satyagraha is rooted in one’s own inner strength. The force of the inner spirit is truth. Truth for Gandhi was the soul. The power of satyagraha, therefore, began to be known as “truth force”. It was based on the integrity of ends and means, as two sides of the same coin. Gandhi regarded the means as important as the ends. The power of satyagraha also relies on the moral good of the oppressor and is aimed at igniting this moral good by transforming the opponent, thus acting as an ennobling force. A satyagrahi (practitioner of satyagraha) must seek a life of truth, love and integrity; be willing to sacrifice the self for the greater good; and be willing to endure suffering of the highest kind in the pursuit of truth. It is only when the satyagrahi is imbued with the courage of love and is devoid of fear that the force of satyagraha is effective in combating social justice. Satyagraha is based on the higher law of love (p.47, Sethia, 2012).

Map:
**Satyagraha**, also referred to as “soul force”, is the entire silhouette of the tree standing courageously from the tips of its roots to the tips of its branches. It is fully grounded, fully engaged and committed to the soil, while at the same time, fully open and committed to the sky (spirit, ethics, highest truth). The health of the roots connected to earth and the health of the branches connected to sky are a reflection of each other. Satyagraha believes in, and reaches for something bigger than itself. “Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible.” (Gandhi, *Harijan*, August 25, 1940 cited in “Ahimsa, or the Way of Nonviolence”, 1992). This stance of strength channels the entire life force of the tree, enabling it to make sacrifices for the sake of the whole.

**Engagement with adult learners:** Reflect on your own “truth force” and represent it in some way on your tree drawing (using words, colors or symbols). Potential questions: What understanding or belief do you hold that most fully engages and inspires you to stay anchored in both your daily
human experience and your ethical values? *(This will be personal for each individual, and consequently, you may or may not want to give people the option to share).* As a school community, what is the truth force that both grounds and inspires us? *(often this a school’s philosophy or mission statement and would be important to reflect on as a group)*

**Ahimsa ~ Nonviolence**

“While truth force can be regarded as the ethical imperative, nonviolence is the action plan” (p. 47 Sethia, 2012). Gandhi’s understanding of *Ahimsa*, nonviolence, does not merely entail resistance against violence, but involves generating a positive force and collective culture that uplifts humanity on a personal and global level. In her lecture entitled *Nonviolence: What and Why?* Sethia points out that in comparing violence and nonviolence, “the premise, aims, modality of action, sources of power and outcomes are very different.” She further states that “nonviolence is rooted in unity rather than division, aims to transform rather than defeat, involves mindfulness as opposed to unconscious action, underscores the essential role of the individual over the system, is rooted in collaboration and cooperation rather than coercion and control, and brings about human development rather than deprivation” (Sethia, 2013 July 30).

**Map:**

A tree cannot exist by its structure alone. What allows it to take shape and determines its level of vitality are the processes within. *Ahimsa*, nonviolence, is represented throughout the tree by the often invisible, yet essential, life-supporting actions of transpiration, respiration and photosynthesis. While *satyagraha* is the strong root, *ahimsa/nonviolence* is present in the millions of root hairs that meet the soil with action, drawing up water and nutrients to be distributed throughout the tree. Nonviolence often involves discerning the need for cooperation or resistance as well as the cyclical actions of giving or receiving. In photosynthesis for example, leaves provide a place where gathered resources, combined with captured sunlight, are transmuted into food to support growth in every cell of the tree. Often a tree will come to the aid of leaves under attack by disease or insects. However, if the leaves do not respond favorably, and the tree is being drained of it’s resources, a layer of cells are formed at the stem, cutting off the transfer of supportive materials and causing the leaves fall off, feeding the soil below. This process of disengaging with unhealthy or harmful cycles is similar to Gandhi’s nonviolent tactics of noncooperation and civil disobedience in the face of systemic injustice.

*Engagement with adult learners:* Reflect upon Nonviolence and represent your understanding on your tree drawing.

Take a moment of silence to reflect on how we are doing as a community with each of the following qualities of *ahimsa*.

Are we rooted in unity or division? …Do we seek to transform or defeat each other? …Are we mindful or unconscious about our actions? …Do we believe in our individual power to change things or do tend to rely on the system to do it? …Are our interactions characterized by collaboration and cooperation or coercion and control?

**Swaraj ~ Freedom**

If we become free, India is free. It is in this thought you have a definition of swaraj. It is swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is therefore in the palm of our hands. Do not consider this swaraj to be like a dream. There is no idea of sitting still. The swaraj that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realized it, we shall endeavor to the ends of our lifetime to persuade others to do the same. (Gandhi, cited in Sethia, 2012 p.64)
Gandhi’s understanding of freedom, *swaraj*, appears simultaneously individual and communal, but must start with the individual and ripple outward.

Map:
In the context of the tree, *swaraj* is growth itself. It requires fearlessness to trust the unknown and to become something new. The smallest movement of growth is what collectively creates the overall growth of the tree. It happens at the tips of branches and roots as well as circumferentially around the branches and trunk. Growth is always possible and never “standing still”. The processes of transpiration, respiration and photosynthesis (the culture of nonviolence) make this growth possible.

*Engagement with adult learners:* Reflect upon and represent *swaraj* on your tree. What conditions and qualities are required for growth to happen as an individual? As a classroom community? As a staff community?

**Constructive Work**
“Gandhi’s vision for *poorna swaraj*, complete freedom, was not possible through merely resisting violence and injustice. It was essential that people be continually engaged in what he called the *constructive program*, activities that addressed a variety of social justice issues within communities across India” (p.68 Sethia, 2012). *Constructive work* gave living form to “soul force” and the way of nonviolence. As people took action to solve specific social justice issues in their community, the work offered a daily experience of freedom and self-reliance that unified and contributed to the greater community.

Map:
*Constructive work* can be represented as the branches of a tree. Just as each community has unique social problems, each tree has a unique branching pattern, giving different forms to the canopy. The direction of growth is based on the needs of the community. The branches hold the leaves, the food-making vehicle for the tree. As growth continues to evolve, the branches lead to buds, unfolding flowers and developing fruit. *Constructive work* leads to healthy structures and movements that feed the larger system and makes possible *Sarvodaya*, wellbeing of all.

*Engagement with adult learners:* Reflect on your understanding of *constructive work*. Represent it in some way in the branches of your tree. How can we approach school and staff problems/challenges in such a way that it spurs growth and inspiration? Recall and share an example of inspiring constructive work that came about in your classroom or in your local community?

**Sarvodaya ~ Well Being of All**
Gandhi believed that “wealth derived through greed and wastefulness” does not lead to fulfillment and that “wealth at the expense of the weak” in society is unethical  (p. 125-6 Sethia, 2012).

Gandhi advocated trusteeship—the voluntary sharing by the rich of their surplus wealth with the poor by holding it in trust for the benefit of the community. “ A trustee has no heir but the public,” said Gandhi. He favored voluntary sharing of the wealth…. He wanted to cultivate in the rich compassion and generosity.”(p.126, Sethia 2012)
Map:
Sarvodaya is the shared wealth or positive expressions in the canopy of a tree...flowers, fruits, seeds. etc. All of these came from the collective work of the whole and must be shared with the whole. The tree, in this fullness, becomes much more than the some of its parts. Others are attracted to its beauty. Pollinators visit, shade creates a gathering place, habitats increase and an ecological community develops. Seeds are dispersed. Each seed is a container of all the principles embodied in the tree and an inspiration for a forest of “soul force” to come.

Engaging adult learners: Reflect on and represent sarvodaya, wellbeing for all, in the canopy of the tree. As a school community, how well do we care for the well being of all as opposed to the well being of 1, a few or most? What are some ways we can share the fruit of our work and talents with others in school? In our community?

Closing words by Gandhi:
“Assassinating the body of course does not matter, for out of my ashes a thousand Gandhi’s will arise. But what if you assassinate or burn the principles I have lived for?” (Gandhi, Harijan on January 16, 1937, cited on p.157, Sethia 2012).

Imagine what could happen if we experimented with Gandhi’s principles in our personal lives? In our classrooms? Among our staff community? Or on a school -wide level?

Bibliography:
MC Yogi -Be the change that u want to see. Video (4:15) published by JDMTV on January 27, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA

Activities:

1. Navigating Personal Growth:
   - Study the map principles and their relationships.
   - Orient the map to your personal experience.
   - Identify strengths and weaknesses in how these principles are carried out in your personal life.
   - Choose 1 area of need that you would like to focus on.
   - Commit to 1 daily act that will bring about more wellbeing in your life.
   - Do it!
   - Keep a daily journal to reflect on the experience around making this shift in your life and any insights as to how Gandhi’s principles manifest and their relationship to the whole.
   - Keep this wisdom in mind as you focus on another shift and action you would like to take. Repeat the process.

2. Navigating the Classroom:
   - Study the map principles and their relationship
   - Orient the map to landscape of your classroom environment
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in how Gandhi’s principles are carried out
- Focus on a shift you would like to make in the classroom.
- Commit to 1 daily act or change in structure that can help bring about that shift.
- Do it!
- Keep a journal to record discoveries
- Repeat the process.

3. **Navigating Staff Development**:
   - Play the 4 min. video *MC Yogi- Be the change that you want to see* (2011)
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA)
   - Using the map, teach the staff about the principles of Gandhi
   - Ask the staff to orient the map to the landscape of the staff community
   - Identify together the strengths and weaknesses
   - Identify together a shift the staff would like to make.
   - Choose an action everyone can commit to
   - Do it!
   - Check in/Reflect on how it is going and use the reflection to inform future action.

4. **Navigating the School Community**:
   *This can be done with parents and/or staff*
   - Play the 4 min. video *MC Yogi- Be the change that you want to see* (2011)
   [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efRIdrl9YNA)
   - With parents and/or staff, study and orient the map to your school community.
   - Repeat the process above in #3.

**Materials Needed**:
- Large visual of a tree from roots to canopy labeled with principles.
- Simple outline of a tree (including soil line, roots, trunk, branches) on 8 1/2x 11 white paper.
- Computer, projector and screen to show video.