Objective(s)

- Students will be able to define freedom, develop their own idea of what freedom means, and provide an example of freedom.
- Students will explore the concepts of freedom, human and civil rights, social justice, oppression, equal rights, and advocacy.
- Students will compare and contrast examples of freedom and oppression in the past, present, and future.
- Students will be able to define the concept of advocacy and describe the actions of a social justice advocate.
- Students will discuss social justice contributions of Dr. Paul Hernandez.

Materials/Preparation

- Markers, colored pencils, crayons, tape, scissors, glue
- Drawing paper, construction paper, old magazines (enough for four groups to have collage making supplies)
- Four pieces of poster board or equal large pieces of butcher paper of equivalent sizes
- Access to computer and printer (optional)
- Handout 1: Word Cards (print and cut one set)
- Handout 2: Collage Assignment Cards (print and cut one set)
Lessons Learned from NEA’s Social Justice Advocates

NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Program Lesson Plans

Dr. Paul Hernandez

Upper Elementary

Grades 3-5

- Handout 3: Letter to the Future You (make one copy per student)
- Prior to teaching the lesson familiarize yourself with Paul Hernandez’s background by reading the Lesson Plan Introduction that can be found at www.nea.org/hcrawards.

Suggested Grouping Structures
Whole group discussion, small group and independent work

Estimated total lesson time: 60 minutes

Opening the Lesson (10 minutes)

Freedom in the Past

1. Place the “Freedom” word card (Handout 1) on the board and ask students to think independently for a moment about what freedom means. After a moment have students turn and share with a neighbor. Ask the pairs to agree on a few words that tell the meaning of freedom. Have each pair share the words they have chosen with the whole group.

2. Tell the class that in today’s lesson, they will be talking about freedom by thinking about what freedom meant in the past and what it will mean in the future, for each of them personally, as well as for the United States and around the world. Say, “You will learn that freedom is something that has to be protected. In many cases, there are groups of people in our country and in our world who do not have the same basic freedoms that they deserve. A person who works to protect the freedom of others is called an advocate and today, we will also learn about a Human and Civil Rights advocate who has taken action to help those at risk by being a difference maker in the lives of youth.”

3. Ask, “What does freedom mean to Americans?” Explain that as citizens in our country we have certain freedoms. Ask for a few examples from the class of what they think those freedoms are and discuss.

4. Explain to students that with freedom comes responsibility. As citizens of our country and the world, we have to be vigilant about freedom, and make sure that all of our fellow human beings are given an opportunity to have the same freedoms that we do. Explain that there were times throughout our history in the United States where not everyone had the same freedoms. Ask students if they can think of any examples and discuss. (Possible answers: there was a time when some citizens couldn’t vote, there was a time period where the color of a person’s skin determined what schools they could go to and what restaurants they could eat in and their basic day to day freedoms, there was a time period when there was slavery.) Say, “Today, we have to
continue to pay attention to not only our own freedom, but the freedom of others also. We have to make sure that things like the amount of money people have, or where people live, do not determine what they can do with their future. We have to look out for our friends as much as we look out for our own freedoms.”

5. Ask, “What is another word we sometimes use that has a similar meaning to freedom?” (Prompt the answer: Rights.) Place the “Rights” word card (Handout 1) on the board. Discuss the meaning of rights.

6. Ask, “What are some things that you think are rights?” List responses on the board. Place the “Human Rights” and “Civil Rights” word cards on the board. Identify a few examples from the list of student suggestions of human rights and civil rights. Supplement the lists as necessary to make sure there are enough examples. Then, point out something on the list of student suggestions that would not actually be a right, but more of a privilege.

7. Post the “Equal Rights” word card (Handout 1). Ask, “What does equal rights mean?” Call on a few volunteers to share and provide examples as needed.

8. Say, “Another word for fair is just. Can anyone think of another term we know that has just as part of the word?” Call on a few volunteers to share. (Prompt the answer: Justice.)

9. Post the “Social Justice” word card (Handout 1). Ask, “What does Social Justice mean?” Call on a few volunteers to share and provide examples as needed.

10. Ask, “What do freedom and justice mean around the world? How has this meaning changed throughout history?” Ask for a few examples from the class and discuss.

11. Place the “Oppression” word card on the board. Ask the class what they think the term “Oppression” means. Ask for a few volunteers to share answers and discuss. (Prompt the response: Oppression is when freedom and human and civil rights are unfairly denied to an individual or group.)

12. Say, “A person who is a caring friend or a good citizen and who stands up for others when they are being oppressed is called an advocate. Place the word card “Advocate” on the board. Today we will learn about one leader and advocate who works with communities, schools, and young people to help ensure that everyone has the same freedom and opportunity to go to school, learn, achieve, and be successful. His name is Dr. Paul Hernandez and we are going to learn about him today.” Post the “Dr. Paul Hernandez” word card (Handout 1) on the board.

Leading the Lesson (40 minutes)

Freedom in the Future

13. Ask students if life is always easy for everyone. Ask, “How do you know when people are treated unfairly? What are some other reasons people are treated unfairly?” (Prompt the answer: life is always easier for some people and harder for others and the reasons for that are not always fair.)

14. Say, “Dr. Paul Hernandez is a person who helped stop unfairness and works to make life better for many people. He is someone who cares about those who are treated unfairly.” Ask, “Why do you think this may be true?”

15. Say, “Dr. Hernandez was given an award from the National Education Association for being a social justice advocate. The award
he received was called the Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award. Mr. Weaver is a social justice advocate too and the award that Mr. Hernandez received was created to honor what Mr. Weaver has done to make life better for others. Mr. Weaver was a classroom teacher for more than 30 years and he did many things to help students and the people in his community and in our country over the years. The National Education Association gives the Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award to a nominee who helps children in America and around the world who are in need. Both Mr. Weaver and Dr. Hernandez also work to make sure that they are not discriminated against because they come from families with less money than other families. A family’s financial circumstances (amount of money they have) should not determine the kind of school their children can go to or if they can go to school. In our country a freedom cannot be taken away because of the amount of money you make or for an reason similar to that. That is called discrimination and people like Mr. Weaver and Dr. Hernandez take action to make sure that this kind of unfair treatment doesn’t happen.”

16. **Say**, “At our school or in our class, we give out awards for citizenship and other positive behaviors.” Ask, “What are some of the things you can be recognized for at our school?”

17. **Ask**, “How are the awards you received also social justice or human and civil rights award? What things are you doing as leaders and citizens that are also like the things a social justice advocate would do?” Have a few volunteers share.

18. **Divide** the class into four groups and give each group one of the Collage Assignment Card (Handout 2). Tell the class what they will be doing for the activity. Say, “As a group you will work together to create a collage that shows what freedom means for the group and time period listed on your assignment card. You can use words and pictures to create your collage. You can draw the pictures, cut them out from magazines, or print and cut out pictures from the Internet (optional). All items should be glued onto poster paper to create the collage.” The four assignments are:

- Freedom in the Past (U.S.A.)
- Freedom in the Future (U.S.A.)
- Freedom in the Past (Around the World)
- Freedom in the Future (Around the World)
19. **Distribute** the collage making supplies and allow a few minutes for students to ask questions about this open-ended assignment. Remind students that their pictures can express both what freedom is and what they want it to be. They can use words to clarify as necessary. For example, they might want to represent the past of the United States by showing that not everyone could vote. For this idea they could find or draw a picture of a polling place or a ballot, and then they would explain that the picture is on the collage to show that not everyone was given the opportunity to vote in the past. Pictures can be used to show the freedoms and rights we have or be examples of freedoms that were not equal, but should be. Remind students to cut the title out from the Assignment Card and glue that onto the top of their poster as well.

20. **Allow** at least 15-20 minutes for groups to create their collages. When all groups have finished, post the collages. Ask each group to stand and tell about their collage. Give group members a turn to say something about their group’s collage.

21. **Discuss** the collages as a class. Ask, “How are they the same? How are they different? What similar human rights issues did America and the world face in their past? What are similar freedoms to be vigilant about in our country’s future and around the world?” Point out examples that have to do with poverty and its impact on a young person’s overall life as well as their education and opportunities in the future. Remind the class that this was the freedom cause that Dr. Daniel Hernandez focused his advocacy actions on.

22. **Share** a little more about Dr. Hernandez’s story with the class from the Lesson Introduction.

23. **Direct** students to look at the collages again. Have students locate images that Paul Hernandez would probably have on his collage too. Ask, “How did Mr. Hernandez’s actions help ensure that at-risk students have the same freedoms as other students?” Call on a few volunteers to share.

**Closing the Lesson (10 minutes)**

**Letter to the Future You**

24. **Ask** students to think about the future they hope to see in their lifetimes. Have them look again at the collages and think about some of the injustices of the past in our country and in the world. Ask them to think about their own roles and responsibilities for ensuring a future with equal rights and equal opportunities for freedom for all people. After a few moments of independent and personal reflection about the questions, distribute Handout 3.
25. **Direct** students to complete Handout 3 by writing a letter to their future self about freedom, the freedoms they hope to have, and the way they hope to help others have freedom as well.

26. **Allow** several minutes for students to complete their letters. After the letters are complete, ask students to read them one final time to close the lesson.

27. **Ask**, “Why does it matter to think about freedom and the future?” Call on a few volunteers to share. Guide the discussion to include the concept of being a mentor. If we care about freedom, it will help us mentor others in the same way that Mr. Hernandez has.

28. **After** the lesson, read the letters as a check for understanding. Then, place each letter in an envelope and write each student’s name on the front with a note that says open in the future. Call on a few volunteers to share responses.

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### Assessment Suggestions
- Participation in group work
- Informally assess understanding using Handout 3

### Adaptations, Enrichment, Cross-curricular Opportunities
- Make this lesson cross collaborative by integrating technology. Students can work in the computer lab to locate and find the pictures for their collages.
- Mural of Freedom: Blend the designs and make a final wall-sized collage created by the entire class. Agree as a class on the title and message for the collage and post it on a wall of the school to share this message school-wide.
freedom
right
Human Rights
Civil Rights

Social Justice

oppression
advocate

Dr. Paul Hernandez
Freedom in the Past (U.S.A.)
Freedom in the Future (U.S.A.)
Freedom in the Past (Around the World)
Freedom in the Future (Around the World)
Dear ________________________________,

(date)

Dear ________________________________,

(date)

Dear ________________________________,

(date)

Dear ________________________________,

(date)

Dear ________________________________,

(date)

Dear ________________________________,

(date)

Dear ________________________________,

(date)
Letter to the Future You (continued)

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