

Lesson Plans

NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Program

Lessons Learned from NEA's Social Justice Advocates

DR. PAUL HERNANDEZ

Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award



Lesson At-A-Glance

- ▶ **Opening the Lesson:**
Defining Freedom
- ▶ **Leading the Lesson:**
A Picture of Freedom
- ▶ **Closing the Lesson:**
Our Own Freedom
Museum Walk

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, discrimination, and equal opportunity.
- ▶ Students will provide examples of social injustice (i.e., when a person's freedom is unfairly taken away or unavailable to them based on their identity, economic, or other demographic factors it is a social injustice).
- ▶ 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
- ▶ Handout 1: Word Cards
- ▶ Handout 2: A Picture of Freedom (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 and independent work

Estimated total lesson time: 30 minutes

Opening the Lesson (10 minutes)

Defining Freedom

1. **Place** the “Freedom” word card (Handout 1) on the board and ask students to think independently for a moment about what freedom means. 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. Ask what freedom they are most looking forward to as adults.



2. **Explain** to students that with freedom comes responsibility. As citizens, we have to be vigilant about freedom, and we have to make sure that all of our fellow citizens and human beings are given an opportunity to have the same freedoms. 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.) 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, does 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.
3. **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.
4. **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.

5. **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.
6. **Say**, “A person who is a caring friend or a good citizen and who stands up for others when they are being treated in an unfair way is also called an advocate and a leader. 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.

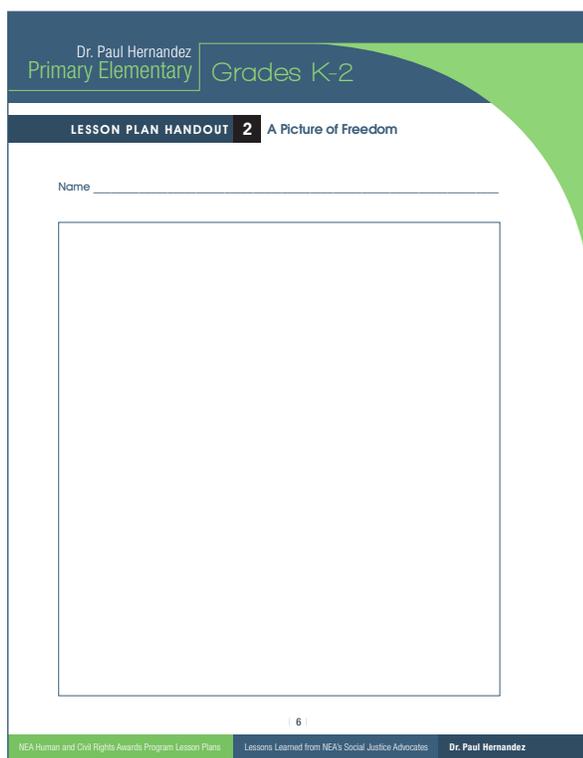
Leading the Lesson (10 minutes)

A Picture of Freedom

7. **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.)
8. **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?”
9. **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.”
10. **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?”
11. **Ask**, “How are the awards you received also social justice or human and civil rights awards? 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.
12. **Share** a little more about Dr. Hernandez’s story with the class from the Lesson Introduction. Ask, “How do the actions that Mr. Hernandez takes help everyone have the same freedoms?” Have a few volunteers share.

13. **Ask**, “What does freedom mean to you?”
Direct students to think independently.

14. **Distribute** Handout 2 and direct students to draw a picture of what freedom means to them.



15. **Allow** several minutes for students to complete their pictures. After the pictures are complete, ask students to tell about their pictures. Ask students to think independently about what they would do if other people in the world, including children, did not have the freedom that they drew their pictures about. How would they feel about it? What could they do to change it? Call on a few volunteers to share responses.

Closing the Lesson (10 minutes)

Our Own Freedom Museum Walk

16. **Post** the Pictures of Freedom around the room and give students a few minutes to walk around the classroom looking at one another's pictures (a Museum Walk).

17. **Bring** the class back together and ask them to imagine the picture that Paul Hernandez might draw for his Picture of Freedom. Allow a few seconds of thinking time. Call on a few students to share answers and discuss.

Assessment Suggestions

- ▶ Participation in class discussion
- ▶ Informally assess understanding using Handout 2

Adaptations, Enrichment, Cross-curricular Opportunities

- ▶ Have the class create a special award for Human and Civil Rights that can be given to a student in their classroom (or school-wide) once a month or week. Have the class create a list of criteria for the award by asking what are some of the ways I can help human and civil rights causes on my own? What are some things I could do to be sure that everyone has the same rights and freedoms?
- ▶ Read a story or news article to the class having to do with a Human Rights issue facing children in another part of the world. Ask students to think about how they could show support and take action to create awareness about the issue. Discuss how students think Dr. Hernandez would address the issue. Have students compose a letter to Dr. Hernandez about the story. With younger students, compose a group letter. With older students, compose individual letters.

freedom

right

Human Rights

Civil Rights

**Dr. Paul
Hernandez**

Name _____

