



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

# THE POWER OF NONVIOLENCE: WHAT IS NONVIOLENCE? WHAT DOES IT COST?

## Teacher's Guide

### Lesson Overview

This lesson uses primary sources and stories of participants in the civil rights movement to introduce students to the concept of nonviolence. Students will analyze the characteristics, costs, and benefits of nonviolence, realizing that it is an active, intentional, and effective way to achieve goals.

Correlations to School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program (SVPDP) curricula are found at the end of this lesson plan.

### Suggested Grade Level

Middle and high school (grades 7–12)

### Estimated Time to Complete

Approximately 60 minutes

### Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, the students will be able to

- describe the characteristics of nonviolence;
- discuss the costs and benefits of using nonviolence.

### Materials Needed

- Student Say-So (Handout 1)—two copies per student
- KWL Chart on Nonviolence (Handout 2)
- Poster paper and markers for the KWL chart and for recording students' ideas during discussion
- Characteristics, Costs, and Benefits Chart (Handout 3)
- Printer-friendly versions of the following:
  - “Heed Their Rising Voices,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1960:  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/exhibit/section4/detail/heed-rising-voices.html>
  - “Rosa Parks,” by Rita Dove, *The Time 100*, June 14, 1999:  
<http://www.yachtingnet.com/time/time100/heroes/profile/parks01.html>

- An excerpt from *Walking with the Wind*, by John Lewis:  
<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/commitment-nonviolence-leadership-john-l>
- “‘School’ Prepares Negroes for Mass Return to Buses,” December 15, 1956:  
[http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/article\\_561215\\_schools.htm](http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/article_561215_schools.htm)
- “Notes from a Nonviolent Training Session,” by Bruce Hartford, 1963:  
<http://www.crmvet.org/info/nv1.htm>

## Lesson Procedure

1. *Beginning the lesson.* Begin the lesson by asking students to respond individually to the statements contained in the **Student Say-So (Handout 1)**. Students respond to the statements with - Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Unsure (U). They should complete the same handout after the lesson and discuss if/how their ideas have changed.
2. *KWL chart on nonviolence.* Complete the **KWL Chart on Nonviolence (Handout 2)** with students to activate prior knowledge and engage students in the lesson. Use the *K* column to record what students already *know*, or think they know, about nonviolence. Use the *W* column to record what they *want* to know. At the end of the lesson, complete the *L* column with facts the students have *learned*. This will also be the point in the lesson at which you invite students to make any necessary corrections to the *K* column as a result of their new learning.
3. *Reading about it.* Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one of the sources listed below. Ask the students to become “experts” on the source by reading and taking notes. Tell the students that at the end of the allotted time, they will present a summary of their source to the class. This summary should include specific examples from their source that demonstrate the characteristics, costs, and benefits of nonviolence. Review these terms with your class, if necessary. The **Characteristics, Costs, and Benefits Chart (Handout 3)** can be used to help students take notes.
  - “Heed Their Rising Voices,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1960:  
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/exhibit/section4/detail/heed-rising-voices.html>
  - “Rosa Parks,” by Rita Dove, *The Time 100*, June 14, 1999:  
<http://www.yachtingnet.com/time/time100/heroes/profile/parks01.html>
  - An excerpt from *Walking with the Wind*, by John Lewis:  
<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/commitment-nonviolence-leadership-john-l>
  - “‘School’ Prepares Negroes for Mass Return to Buses,” December 15, 1956:  
[http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/article\\_561215\\_schools.htm](http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/article_561215_schools.htm)
  - “Notes from a Nonviolent Training Session,” by Bruce Hartford, 1963:  
<http://www.crmvet.org/info/nv1.htm>

4. *Whole-class discussion.* Use the quotation below to stimulate the class discussion:

“Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?” You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue [so] that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.

—Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

Questions to guide discussion:

- According to this quotation, what is the goal of nonviolence?
- Why is nonviolence effective in achieving this goal?
- What have you learned today that demonstrates King’s point? Give specific examples from your reading.

5. *Concluding the lesson.*

- Complete and correct the **KWL Chart on Nonviolence (Handout 2)**.
- Give students a fresh copy of the **Student Say-So (Handout 1)**. Discuss to see if their attitudes toward nonviolence have changed.

### **Supplemental Activity: Write a Letter**

Remind students that Malcolm X, at one time, did not believe that nonviolence was the best way to gain rights for African Americans. In 1964, he wrote, “Concerning nonviolence: it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks.” Write a letter from Martin Luther King Jr. to Malcolm X persuading him that nonviolence is the best way to seek justice for African Americans. Include the characteristics of nonviolence, why it is effective, and other reasons why it should be used. Address concerns that Malcolm X might have had about using this method.

### **Correlations to the SVPDP Curricula**

*Foundations of Democracy*, middle school level

Authority: Unit 1, Lessons 1 and 3  
Unit 2, Lessons 6 and 7  
Unit 3, Lesson 8

Privacy: Unit 1, Lessons 1, 2, and 3  
Unit 4, Lessons 9, 10, 11, and 12

Responsibility: Unit 1, Lesson 2  
Unit 3, Lessons 6, 7, and 8

Justice: Unit 1, Lesson 1  
Unit 2, Lesson 2  
Unit 3, Lessons 6 and 7  
Unit 4, Lessons 11 and 12

*Foundations of Democracy*, high school level

Authority: Unit 1, Lessons 1 and 2  
Unit 2, Lessons 6 and 7  
Unit 3, Lesson 8

Privacy: Unit 1, Lessons 1, 2, and 3  
Unit 4, Lessons 9 and 10

Responsibility: Unit 1, Lesson 3  
Unit 3, Lessons 5 and 6

Justice: Unit 1, Lesson 1  
Unit 2, Lesson 3  
Unit 3, Lessons 6 and 7  
Unit 4, Lessons 10 and 11

*We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution*, Level 2 (middle school)

Unit 1, concepts from Lesson 3  
Unit 5, Lessons 23, 25, and 26  
Unit 6, Lessons 29 and 30

*We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution*, Level 3 (high school)

Unit 1, Lesson 2  
Unit 5, Lesson 27  
Unit 6, Lessons 33, 34, and 35

*Project Citizen*, Level 1 (middle school)

What Is Public Policy and Who Makes It?

*Project Citizen*, Level 2 (high school)

Chapter 1: Introduction to Project Citizen  
Chapter 2: An Introduction to Public Policy  
Chapter 4: Why Is Citizen Participation Important to Democracy?

This lesson was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents do of this lesson do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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