



PLAN: CESAR CHAVEZ & SOCIAL JUSTICE

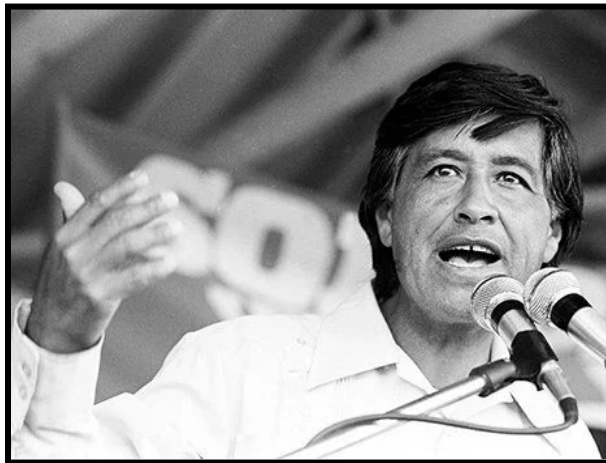


Image courtesy of Getty Images [NBC Los Angeles.com](https://www.nbclosangeles.com), Cesar Chavez speaks at a United Farm Workers rally in Coachella, Ca. 1977.

How do those who are marginalized organize to overcome injustice?

Rationale: Students will engage a social problem solving strategy, PLAN, to learn how people of the past solved problems of labor exploitation and food safety. In PLAN students will think about multiple sides of a public problem and discover ways to solve this problem to address the issues of worker and food safety. This strategy will help students develop the skills for effective citizenship, practice civic engagement skills, and to organize social action in their communities.

The PLAN framework stands for **P**roblem Description, **L**ist of Options, **A**ction Plan, and **N**otice Successes. Through this framework, the students will be able to analyze a problem, generate their own solutions, create an implementation plan to solve the problem, and reflect on the problem-solving process. The framework can be applied to a variety of different issues such as current events and historical events.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana).

PLAN helps students to really take this lesson to heart and to learn from the mistakes of the past by analyzing what worked well and what did not by fairly weighing the options and considering

potentially better alternatives, rather than passively learning about what took place or simply what didn't work. It nudges students to think about what could be done differently.

Please note that the idea of PLAN is to help students learn and use a specific problem-solving strategy. If you or other teachers in your grade already are using such a strategy, perhaps as part of an SEL or character education or bully/violence prevention or related program, you may want to use that as a framework instead of PLAN, for the sake of consistency for students.

Objective(s): Examine speeches by Cesar Chavez to determine how he galvanized farm workers to sacrifice their individual well-being for their community and the health of all consumers.

Target Grade Levels: 9-12

Standards:

- **NJSLS-SS.6.1.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information.
- **NJSLS-SS.6.1.12.HistoryCC.13.d:** Analyze the successes and failures of women's rights organizations, the American Indian Movement, and La Raza in their pursuit of civil rights and equal opportunities.
- **NJLSA.R7.** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- **NJLSA.SL1.** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SEL Focal Skill: Responsible Decision Making

- Develop, implement, and model effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
- Evaluate the personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions.

Materials & Resources:

- Pencils/pens

- Notebooks
- Computer with audio & projector for teacher
- Chromebooks/laptops for students to use
- Audio recording: [1:34 Audio Recording of Cesar Chavez](#)
- Excerpts from Cesar Chavez’s speeches (see the end of the lesson plan for the documents)
- Copies of Graphic organizers
 - Problem Description [Graphic Organizer](#)
 - PLAN [Graphic Organizer](#) (if time doesn’t allow for the more detailed problem description)
 - SMART Goal [Graphic Organizer](#)
 - Pro-Con Options [Graphic Organizer](#)

Timing: Four, forty-five minute periods

Preparation: Assign students into small groups of no more than 4-5 per group. Inform students that *“today you will be learning about a courageous leader, Cesar Chavez, who organized farmer workers to protest for labor protections, civil rights and public health in the 1960s - 1980s. You will work in groups to examine his speeches and simulate a problem solving strategy to learn how leaders organize collective social action in a democratic society.”*

Have the graphic organizers and primary sources ready to hand out, if not already assigned for homework:

- Problem Description [Graphic Organizer](#)
- PLAN Graphic Organizer [Graphic Organizer](#) (if time doesn’t allow for the more detailed problem description)
- SMART Goal [Graphic Organizer](#)
- Pro-Con Option [Graphic Organizer](#)

Lesson Procedure:

Part I: Introduction & Problem Description (45 minutes)

1. **Homework:** To save some time during the lesson consider having students read and annotate the primary sources found at the end of the lesson plan.
2. **Do Now:** Note, students will engage a quote that reflects the norms and values of the 1970s. Feel free to share the following with students. **“Flexible gender roles as we understand them today, where women and men participate actively in public discourse, were not a part of society in which this quote was spoken. In the 1970s**

women were often excluded from the public sphere, yet women were directly affected by the activity of public discourse. The language in the quote you will engage by today's standards is considered sexist and should be considered as reflecting the norms and values of the time. The substance of the quote should be appreciated despite this quality. ”

Write on the board/project the statement below that Cesar Chavez once said. You may read it aloud or have a student read it aloud. Ask students to respond by jotting down their reactions and have them share out with the class.

"When the man who feeds the world by toiling in the field is himself deprived of the basic rights of feeding and caring for his own family, the whole community of man is sick."

3. Provide background information:

- Give students time to listen to a brief audio recording of Cesar Chavez. See link above in the materials section.
- Then have students read the excerpts of Cesar Chavez's speeches.
- Provide time for students to look up the term "rate" and "cancer cluster" to learn what this means.

4. Problem Description: In their groups, students will craft a written Problem description in their notebooks after answering the following questions below about the problem, who is impacted, perspectives, and other factors at play to prompt their thinking. Use the problem description graphic organizer embedded above to support the student's collaborative efforts to engage these questions and range of thinking to help them define the problem. If time doesn't allow for this part of PLAN, you may use the PLAN graphic organizer embedded above.

- Is there a problem? How do you know?
- What is the problem?
- Where is the event described in the source occurring?
- Who is impacted by the problem?
- What is the impact?
- Who is responsible for the problem?
- What is causing those responsible to use these practices?
- What are the issues from each perspective/party involved?
- Who were the key people involved in making important decisions?

- What internal and external factors might have influenced this issue?

Then, to culminate, have each group draft a description of the problem. Feel free to select a few groups and read their descriptions aloud to check for understanding.

Example problem description students might generate:

Wealthy California grape growers' use of pesticides led to increased rates of cancers among farm working communities and their children. The pesticides were even passed onto consumers and the farm workers saw it was their responsibility to challenge the grape growers' use of pesticides for the health of their community and consumers.

Part II: Listing Options & Action Planning (70 minutes)

1. Have students **List Options** for solutions for how they might have solved the problem encountered by the farm workers. So this section asks about the hypothetical options and the next one asks about an analysis of the reasoning process used by the individuals at the time.
 - Identify a SMART GOAL using the [Graphic Organizer](#) (Specific, Measurable, Action Plan, Realistic, and Timely - *link provided at the end of the lesson*) if relevant, from different groups in the situation, ie. farm workers, consumers, grape growers
 - List as many short and long term solutions as you can think of.
 - Pick 2-3 solutions and think about the pros and cons of these options. *See graphic organizer.*
2. Facilitate a whole class discussion, using the questions below, to help students process and report out what they discovered about how the actual historical event-problem was addressed and reflect on their solution development. Consider referencing the teaching tips to explore the potential to reverse steps 1 and 2 listed here.
 - What options did they consider to be acceptable ways to resolve the problem?
 - What do you think about their solution?
 - What would your solution be?

- What solution did they ultimately decide to pursue?

Example options students might generate: file a complaint with the public health officials, call for a meeting between parties to work out a resolution, rally media attention to the issue to apply pressure to the grape farmers, call for a strike of agricultural workers

Options students might pick: agricultural workers organize a labor strike

Pros: sends a powerful message to grape farmers, slows productivity

Cons: doesn't involve the consumers, loss of wages

3. Have students create their own **Action Plan** they might have used for addressing this problem and analyze the plan that was used in history.
 - Create action steps to outline how you would solve the problem (action steps for different groups if relevant).
 - What obstacles might you encounter?
 - What was the plan created to solve the problem? (allow students to do research here)
 - How is your plan different from the plan created? Students will need to conduct research on the 1986 Wrath of Grapes Boycott.
 - How did they carry out the plan in history?
 - What obstacles did they not anticipate?

Sample Action Plan:

1. Gather workers to meet to discuss the importance and strategy of the strike
 2. Announce the strike, its rationale and purpose
 3. Coordinate resources to offset loss of income and groceries
 4. Develop responses to pressure tactics by farmers
4. Present **Action Plans** (additional 45 minutes/full class period): Student groups can present their action plans to a hypothetical audience of either: farm workers/consumer agencies/public health experts. Consider pulling members of the school community to serve as panelist school nurse, foods teacher, another social studies teacher, union leader, etc. This will allow students to rehearse their public communication skills with

the STAT strategy of Audience Focused Communication.

The speeches can be accompanied by slides, but should take into account crafting their presentation to account for the specific audience assigned. Please reference the Audience Focused Communication guidelines to help support students prepare for their presentations. If you would like to develop this part of the lesson consider following up this lesson with a separate lesson on Audience Focused Communication prior to having student groups present their action plans.

Part III: Notice Successes & Reflect on the PLAN Process (20 minutes)

1. **Notice successes!** Debrief with the whole class by leading a discussion on the following questions.
 - How did the plan work in history?
 - What went well?
 - What did not go well?
 - How would your plan have worked differently?
 - What can be learned from their experience that is relevant to the present?

Example: The workers decided to boycott and call national attention of consumers to boycott California table grapes in June of 1984. As the boycott continued in 1988 Cesar Chavez went on a hunger strike. The boycott continued up to November of 2000 when the UFW called off the boycott. Though Chavez died in 1993, the five most toxic pesticides were eliminated from use, but the boycott failed to gain a large following.

If students noticed that the historic action plan wasn't successful/effective or didn't speak to the specific stakeholders, consider having the students go back and revise/or reflect on how they would revise. (needs finessing)

Formative Assessment: Have students write a reflection on one/assign one of the following questions below:

- Upon considering Cesar Chavez's leadership, what skills are crucial for social action?
- How are the rights of one group tied to the rights of others? Refer back to the quote from the beginning of the lesson.

- What lessons from the experiences of the farm workers table grape boycott are relevant to today?
- How did looking at the issue from many sides enrich the development of your action plan?
- How did brainstorming as many solutions as possible influence your action plan, and what does this say about thinking 'outside the box'?"
- "How does anticipating obstacles influence your action plan and likely outcomes?"

Lesson Extension:

Have students reflect on the role of goal setting and/or organizational skills in the PLAN activity in a written or digital exit ticket. Alternatively, you can have them create flip-grid videos to post. These skills are key self-management skills that support preparation for a range of academic discussions and presentations.

Primary Sources: Cesar Chavez Speeches

Part 1 -Excerpt

"The Central Valley of California is one of the wealthiest agricultural regions in the world. In its midst are clusters of children dying from cancer. The children live in communities surrounded by the grape fields that employ their parents. The children come into contact with the poisons when they play outside, when they drink the water, and when they hug their parents returning from the fields. And the children are dying. They are dying slow, painful, cruel deaths in towns called cancer clusters, like McFarland, where the children's cancer rate is 800 percent above normal."

"Other young children are suffering from similar fatal diseases that the experts believe are caused by pesticides. These same pesticides can be found on the grapes you buy in the stores. My friends, the suffering must end. We have no choice, we have to stop the plague of pesticides."

Part II - Excerpt

"The growers responsible for this outrage are blinded by greed, by racism, and by power. The same inhumanity displayed at Selma, in Birmingham, in so many of Dr. King's battlegrounds, is displayed every day on the vineyards of California.

Part 3 - Excerpt

"The simple act of refusing to buy table grapes laced with pesticides is a powerful statement that the growers understand. For your safety, for the workers, and for the children, we must act together. My friends, Dr. King realized that the only real wealth comes from helping others. I challenge you to carry on his work by volunteering to work for a just cause you believe in."

Part 4 - Excerpt

"Our struggle is not easy, Those who oppose our cause are rich and powerful and they have many allies in high places. We are poor. Our allies are few. But we have something the rich do not own. We have our own bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as weapons. When we are really honest with ourselves we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So, it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of people we are. It is my belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice."