

César Chávez Day of Service and Learning: A Guide **FOR** Berkeley Teachers **BY** Berkeley Teachers



“The end of all education should surely be service to others.”

We sometimes use days honoring our national heroes as time off, or as simple recognition of their values and lives. We are suggesting here that we make better use of these days to engage children in projects that teach them how to effect change, that teach them the meaning of service learning.

This is a guide for placing Cesar Chavez in an historical context and using his values to address today’s issues. We should expose the students to ideas and actions that lead to justice. For example, in a world overwhelmed with greed and selfishness, we can teach our children about sacrifice and generosity as Cesar practiced them, through actions such as fasting, living simply, and showing concern for others. ***In a world experiencing such horrifying violence, we can teach our children the value of non-violence.***

This guide consists of very specific and practical suggestions for creating a service learning experience in your classroom and/or school and is geared to K-5 teachers and students. ***Honoring Cesar means getting the kids out of their seats and doing something that benefits someone else.***

Service Learning: Students as Teachers

One very successful approach used in many BUSD 1st-5th classrooms has been that of helping a group of students become “experts” in a particular topic related to the values and history of Cesar Chavez’ life, and then creating an opportunity for them to share their learning with younger students at their same site. Here is a step-by-step recipe, in this case using 5th graders as the older group of students becoming experts. **This basic structure can be used with all grade levels.**

5th graders are organized in small groups (4 or 5) and supported for a couple of weeks to research their topic, and their audience. All classroom teachers are responsible for teaching background about Cesar’s life and work. Then the 5th graders can go into the classrooms with specific topics and projects. They talk to the teachers of the classes they will be “teaching” to find appropriate levels of materials and topics. This involves reading source material, writing lesson plans, working cooperatively, gathering materials and practicing their presentations, all under the guidance of their 5th grade teacher.

On the day of the teach-in, each 5th grade group takes its box of materials to their assigned class. To make a strong visual statement as they move their class, students may want to bring with them flags, boxes, books etc. Some years we have ordered t-shirts with union logos etc. In one or two days, with each session about 45 minutes, the older students teach the younger students.

As part of their presentation, depending on the topic, the older students can incorporate fundraising into their lesson, with the money going to the Farmworkers or Haiti relief, for

example. The whole school can sort and count the money, with 5th graders leading the work. For example, Kinders can sort into pennies, nickels etc, and the other grades can count.

After their teaching experience each group reviews their teach-in and shares their experience.

The goal of this approach is to educate the mind, and also the heart, to give kids ways to work together and resolve problems. With such huge scary issues in our children's lives, the opportunity to learn about and use tools to make change is crucial. This is also a way to create curriculum that does not need special funding but strengthens our student's abilities to navigate the world around them.

Specific Examples You Can Use in Your Classroom:

Here are some specific examples of how BUSD teachers have used this "students as teachers" structure to create a service learning experience for their students:

1) Farmer Duck: Older students were given a book called Farmer Duck by Martin Waddell. This is a simple picture book that deals with the exploitation of workers (in this case, farm animals) and how organizing the farm animals gave them power over their lives. It is the basis of the UFW in terms that a 4- or 5-year-old can understand. And it gives the 5th graders the ability to explain a complex concept in simple terms. We encourage teachers to use the BFT grant application (attached) to apply for funds to purchase these books.

2) The freeze in the fields and what that meant to the farmworkers (and a science lesson built in). We raised money for out-of-work farmworkers, learned what extreme cold does to plants, and raised awareness of how tough things were, right at that moment, for the people who pick the food we eat.

3) Child labor, giving the students an opportunity to understand the huge range of experience of children in this country and the world, and what are some options to effect change. Some children had direct knowledge of what it is like to work in the fields and could be "experts."

4) One year we took a couple of classes to strawberry fields near Salinas to experience picking strawberries themselves.

5) We have also, for several years, taken a class to teach at Centro Vida, a Berkeley bilingual preschool. The preschool is divided into 3 groups, so our kids were also in 3 groups. The lesson was very simple for the 2-year-olds (a story and a song) and more complex for the 3- and 4-year-olds (story, song, art project). This kind of service learning could be extended to other preschools, including our BUSD preschools, King, Little Franklin, and Hopkins.

Teacher Resources:

- The UFW website (www.ufw.org) can be accessed in Spanish) gives up-to-date information on union issues today and the basic history of the Union.
 - The District has provided to each school the Cesar Chavez Learning Resource Kit, which includes grade level standards relevant to this study, and a Service Learning Tool Kit, which has suggestions for projects, standards-based lesson plans by grade level, and a bibliography.
 - The Chávez Memorial Solar Calendar Project is a memorial at César Chávez Park that readily lends itself to school visits - www.solarcalendar.org
 - The City wide Chávez Commemoration Web Pages list events and teacher resources for the commemorative period (March 20th-April 23rd) - www.ecologycenter.org/chavez.
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6) Here are other topic ideas from teachers in Berkeley K-5 schools:

- Non-violence
- Labor organizing
- Haiti (both relief and Haitian Farmworkers here in the U.S.)
- Pesticides : You can use the video “No Grapes” with 5th graders; this video is available from the BUSD Central Media Library (see bibliography)
- Environmental concerns
- Undocumented workers and immigration issues
- How plants grow
- Health care
- Seasons (solarcalendar.org)
- Cesar’s core values – Service, Sacrifice, Determination, Tolerance, Knowledge, etc
- Recycling
- Collecting school supplies for farmworker communities
- All school clean up (cooperation)
- Planting strawberries to be distributed with info honoring Cesar and the UFW.

Another Option: Letters Based on the Book “Dear Dr. King”:

This year, in addition to the above suggestions, we encourage sites to consider sponsoring a letter-writing project based on the book Dear Dr. King (see bibliography), which is a collection of letters written by today’s kids to Dr. King about conditions in their world today. BUSD students will be encouraged to write to Cesar Chavez about today’s world and the issues he was so concerned about. What do children today see in the areas of **immigration, non-violence, environmental concerns, worker’s rights**, etc.? BFT and the community coalition are seeking ways to have the letters posted throughout the district. We encourage teachers to use the BFT grant application (attached) to apply for funds to purchase these “Dear Dr. King” books.

Bibliography - see websites and district binder for additional books and videos.

These are recommended source books **for teachers**:

1. The Words of Cesar Chavez -- edited by Richard J. Jensen and John C. Hammerback (Cesar's ideas in his own words)
2. Huelga – The First Hundred Days of the Great Delano Grape Strike – Eugene Nelson (History of the early Union work)
3. Sal Si Puedes –Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution – Peter Matthiessen (History of the Union and Cesar)
4. Cesar Chavez: A Triumph of Spirit – Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia (Biography and History of the Movement)
5. The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworker Movement –Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval (History of the Movement)
6. Beyond the Fields, Cesar Chavez, the UFW and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century – Randy Shaw (Critical look back at the strengths and weaknesses of the UFW and its relevance today)

These are recommended books **for children**:

1. Farmer Duck – Martin Waddell and Helen Oxenbury
2. Cesar Si Se Puede! Yes We Can! – Carmen T. Bernier-Grand (In Spanish and English)
3. La Causa – The Migrant Farmworkers Story – Dana Catharine de Ruiz and Richard Larios
4. Cesar Chavez – Ruth Franchere
5. Cesar Chavez and La Causa – Naurice Roberts (Spanish and English)
6. Cesar Chavez – Union Leader -- Bruce W. Conord
7. Let's Read About Cesar Chavez – Jerry Tello
8. Elegy on the Death of Cesar Chavez – Rudolfo Anaya -- This is a beautiful book and a rich source of language and poetry.
9. Trouble In The Hen House - A Puppet show
10. Harvesting Hope – The story of Cesar Chavez / Cosechando esperanza --Kathleen Krull, Illus. By Yuyi Morales (Spanish and English). 2-5
11. Side by Side, Lado a Lado: The story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez - Monica Brown, Illus. By Joe Cepeda (Great new bilingual book parallels both lives.) K-5
12. Dear Dr. King – Letters from Today's Children to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – edited by Jan Colbert and Ann McMillan Harms, published by Hyperion Books for Children.
13. The Circuit (Moving story of migrant farmworkers' lives) / Cajas de Carton: relatos de la vida peregrina de un niño campesino – Francisco Jimenez

14. Cesar Chavez – Jonathan Brown. (Spanish 3-5)
15. Cesar Chavez lucha por los trabajadores – Eric Braun 3-5 (Graphic Novel 3-5 in Spanish)
16. Cesar Chavez, a Photo Illustrated Biography / Cesar Chavez, una Biografia Ilustrada con Fotos -- Lucile Davis

NOTE: In general, in addition to any one of the biographical books, the most appealing for students might be:

Farmer Duck for Preschool-1st grade

Elegy on the Death of Cesar Chavez, and Harvesting Hope for 2nd-5th

The Circuit for 4th and 5th

The new, bilingual Side by Side, Lado a Lado for K-5

Recommended Videos –

*No Grapes – (also in Spanish)

*Common Man, Uncommon Vision (comes with study guide)

*The Fight In The Fields (an excellent study guide and standards based curriculum for middle and high school students is available online).