



**American Immigration Law Foundation
Immigration Curriculum Center Lesson Plan**

Cesar Chavez and the Mexican-American Field Worker Experience

Grade Level: 5th – 8th Grades

Goal: To teach students about the life and work of Cesar Chavez and to document the experiences of contemporary agricultural field workers. After learning about the work of Cesar Chavez, the students will design and conduct original research about the conditions and needs of today's field workers. The end product of this project will be a booklet reporting on the research and findings of the students. This booklet will be printed and made available as a resource for the local school district and the community at large.

Objectives:

- Conduct research about the life and times of Cesar Chavez.
- Based on this research, write an essay including personal reflections about Cesar Chavez.
- Design and administer a research survey about the conditions of today's field workers.
- Build a data base of the data obtained from the survey.
- Analyze the data.
- Create ancillary educational tools about Cesar Chavez, such as a puzzle, word search, and inspirational mobile.
- Write and publish a book about Cesar Chavez and today's field workers.
- Implement one or more community projects to honor Cesar Chavez.

Materials:

- Internet research worksheet (attached)
- Essay writing guide
- LCD projector or video adapter to display computer images to the whole class
- Computer(s) with Internet access

- Physical access to a library (school or public)
- Software - word processing or publishing, data base, spreadsheet
- Digital Camera
- Clipboards
- Construction Paper (red, black, white)
- Handouts (Chart and Project Report)

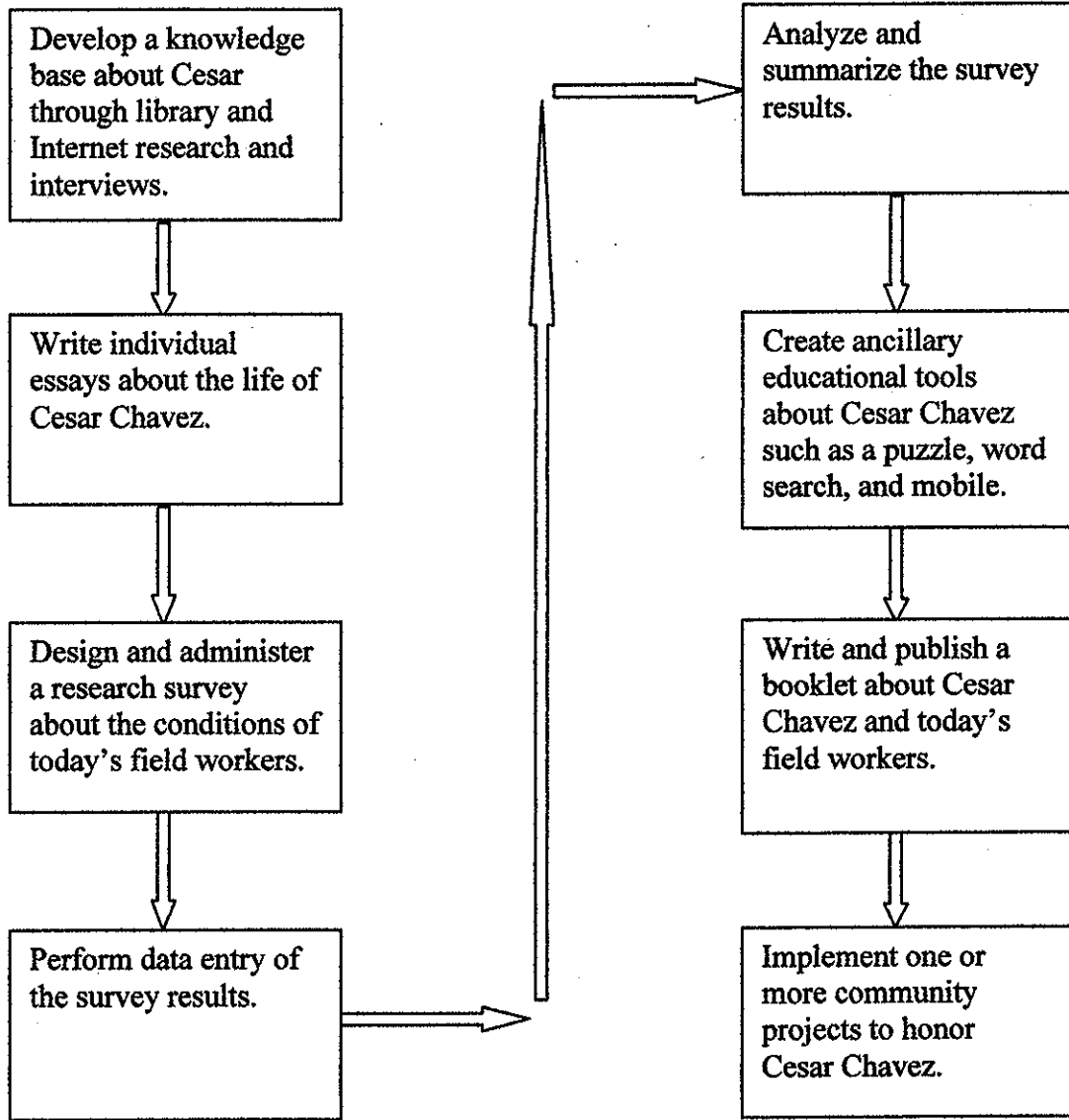
Procedure:

1. Conduct a KWL session to introduce the project and to establish the level of baseline knowledge. Possible questions to stimulate this discussion might be: Who is Cesar Chavez and how did he change our country? Do you know that the date March 21 is a California state holiday in his honor? Since his life ended before you were born, how much do you really know about his accomplishments? How does he compare with other great Americans? Is his work finished, or is there more to be done?
2. Ask what students know about conducting research on the Internet, such as search engines, search strings, citing sources, etc. Introduce the Internet research worksheet and model how it may be used. This modeling should be done with the LCD projector or video adapter so that the entire class can view it. Develop a list of potential search strings based on student suggestions. Schedule a visit to a library or computer lab to conduct research for essays. After students write essays, conduct a discussion to determine if the criteria on the KWL chart are satisfied.
3. Conduct a brainstorming session to design a survey questionnaire for agricultural field workers. Create a draft copy of the questionnaire. Submit the draft copy for review and revision. Other teachers, community leaders, librarians may be able to help with the review. If necessary, translate the questionnaire into a second language to facilitate comprehension by the agricultural workers. Create a plan for administering the survey: Who? When? Where? How? As completed questionnaires are returned, students will perform data entry using a data base software program. Students will summarize the data using data base, spreadsheet, and word processing software. The teacher will lead an analysis session to identify statistical results, trends, anomalies. Ask students to propose cause and affect relationships to explain the data.
4. As a culminating activity, students will publish a booklet about Cesar Chavez and their own original research about the field workers. Student teams may be assigned different segments of the booklet. The booklet can include ancillary educational activities such as a crossword puzzle, word search, and a mobile.

Extension Activity: As an extension activity, the students can look for a way to honor Cesar Chavez in the community. Examples include re-naming a road or public building, painting a mural, creating a display for the public library or municipal building.

Assessment: Students may be assessed individually based on the strength of their Internet research on Cesar Chavez. Student essays may be evaluated on the basis of the Six Trait Writing criteria. Teams of students may be graded collectively on their contributions to the booklet. Scoring rubrics should be provided to the students so that expectations are clearly communicated.

Cesar Chavez Grant Project Somerton Middle School



PROJECT REPORT

This report describes an AILF-funded project conducted by the 7th grade students at the Somerton Middle School during the 2005-2006 school year. An overview of the project is provided on the attached flow chart. Prior to implementation, the teacher met with the President of the school board to review the project and received his full approval.

Cesar E. Chavez was one of the most influential people in modern American history. His advocacy for agricultural field workers raised awareness about their working conditions and brought about positive change. His legacy continues today as activists for immigration rights recall Cesar's rallying call, "Si, se puede, Yes, you can!" The students at the Somerton Middle School in Somerton, Arizona are the beneficiaries of the Chavez legacy. They live in the area where Cesar was born and died. Many of their families earn a living working in the agricultural fields. Some students can trace a familial relationship to Cesar Chavez. Some of their older relatives knew Cesar and worked with him. Almost all of the students are of Mexican ancestry, and some are immigrants themselves. In short, the Cesar Chavez story is highly relevant to these students.

Although Cesar's name recognition was evident among the students, most of them were not highly knowledgeable about the details of his life and work. One purpose of this project was to fill that knowledge gap. This was accomplished by having them conduct library research and write essays. A few students included research interviews with relatives who actually knew Cesar. Having developed a knowledge base, the main component of this project called for the students to create and administer a survey questionnaire to today's agricultural field workers. The purpose of the survey was to document, through original research, the conditions of today's field workers as well as their desires for further improvement. As a final component, the printing of 45 copies of the booklet. These copies are being distributed as follows:

- All school libraries in the Somerton District.
- All public libraries in the Yuma County library system.
- Various community service organizations.
- The local labor department.

Two unplanned elements were added to the project as a result of student interest. One of these was to request that a road in Somerton be re-named in honor of Cesar Chavez. The students wrote letters to local officials requesting the change. The initial request was to implement the name change for Main Street. However, since Main Street is part of a state highway, this request must go through a lengthy review and approval process involving multiple state agencies. As an alternative, The Mayor suggested that the name change be implemented on Avenue F. Therefore, the students conducted a petition drive (as required by local ordinance) of two-thirds of the residents along the road in order for the name change to be approved. The students also raised money through the sale of popsicles to help offset the cost of changing the name of the road. The road name change is expected to be approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council during the month of June, 2006.

A second unplanned component of the project was to request an Arizona state holiday. When the students discovered that neighboring California had a state holiday for Cesar Chavez, they asked why Arizona did not have one. Therefore, each student wrote a letter to the Governor and members of both houses of the legislature. As of this writing, only one response has been received from the state officials. That response was from a state senator, who indicated that the request for a holiday would not be feasible during the current session of the legislature, but he promised to pass on the request to the next session.

Overall, the students benefited from this project in a number of ways. First, they acquired a great deal of knowledge about Cesar Chavez. Second, they learned how to conduct original research, as well as how to record and analyze the resulting data. Third, they learned or improved their skills in several computer software programs such as database, spreadsheet, and word processing. Fourth, through the extension activities, they learned that they have a voice to implement change in the community, specifically, re-naming the road. Fifth, they improved their skills to work cooperatively as team members toward a common goal.