

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT *YOU HAVE A VOICE, AND IT MATTERS!*

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YOU HAVE A VOICE, AND IT MATTERS!

Lesson 7 of Civic Engagement Program

Skill Level

Intermediate (6th-8th grades)

Educational Standards

Supported

Learner Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- Identify societal issues they are interested in learning more about
- Research how these issues impact their state and local community
- Identify how to engage local government and community leaders on specific issues
- Reflect on the power of using one's voice and ways young people have created positive change throughout history using their voice
- Inspire others to see themselves as agents for positive change and empower them to use their voice

Tag(s)

4-H Citizenship

Time Needed – 60 minutes

Materials Needed

- Access to the internet
- Computer, LCD projector, screen
- Images of young people who made a difference by using their voice to create positive change

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Introduction to Content

This lesson has been developed to help you facilitate a learning experience where students are able to reflect, connect and act as they become more aware of the power of using their voice. At the end of the lesson, students should have identified an issue they are interested in learning more about, discovered who their local and regional government leaders are who are currently working on that issue, reflect on ways that young people have used their voice to create positive change throughout history and begin identifying a few small potential actions they might want to take to use their voice.

“Voice,” in this context is not limited to verbal speech but can refer to any form of expression or communication.

Introduction to Methodology

Methods used for this lesson include a PowerPoint presentation, students researching relevant local and regional leaders and a facilitated discussion on how young people used their voice and how these students can too.

Teacher Talk

It might be helpful for the teacher to identify who the local and regional leaders are and place them on the screen after the activity so that students who cannot find this information will see it.



Setting the Stage/Opening Question

Begin the lesson with showing some changes that have occurred in society and then show the picture of the young person/student who was part of making that change.

Then open a discussion about how there are many issues in the world, but we all have the power to use our voice to make a difference.

Then ask students, “Are there any issues you see in your community, state, or country that you would like to see change for the better?”

Provide students with a few minutes of self-reflection to write down an issue they identify, and why they think it’s important. It’s OK if there are students who are not sure of what issue(s) they would want to explore. You might want to walk around the classroom or help them through facilitating a brief discussion about what they love most about their community that they wish more communities could have or a discussion about if they could change anything in their community, what would it be?

Allow students time to use a search engine (as the instructor deems appropriate) to research the issue and go to their local government website/TN government website to see what they can find about what leaders/offices have oversight on those issues. After students have gathered the information available to them, bring them back together for a conversation about why their voice matters.

Experience

Start with, “You have a voice, and it is powerful.”

Move into showing a few PowerPoint slides of issues that were solved because a young person used their voice. Empower students by letting them know that they can make a difference too, even at their age.

Open a discussion about what issues they most care about or would want to see improvement on locally, regionally or nationally? Ask them what issues they wrote down during their self-reflection time.

Present in more detail an example of how a young person used their voice (i.e. wrote a letter to the mayor, spoke at a city council meeting, organized a community service day, a peaceful gathering to bring awareness to an issue, etc.).

Strategies to Increase Student Engagement

Have pictures on-hand of people who have made a change. Use pictures of Martin Luther King, Jr; Nelson Mandela, Kid President Robby Novak, or others who have used their voices to make a positive change.

Remind youth to keep an open mind and ask them to make all comments positive ones. Say, “We do not all have the same values, but we can be kind and respectful as we discuss societal issues.”

Give the example of John Lewis, a college student in Nashville who made a difference by desegregating the downtown area.

Ask students to write down some ideas for how they might use their voice now or in the future.

Conclude by engaging students to practice using their voice. Have students get into small groups and share about what issue(s) in which they want to use their voice. The instructor should move around the room to listen to some of the ideas being voiced. After the discussion, the instructor should ask if there are a few students who would like to share with the larger group.

After the discussion, ask students how they could best use their voice for the issue they have chosen. Suggest writing a letter to legislators or to the editor of the local newspaper. Comment that visiting an office and speaking to a manager could be helpful. Ask if voting is a way for their voice to be heard. The answer is **YES**.

Share/Process

Ask students to engage in their small groups where they can practice using their voice with their peers. This should be an encouraging and affirming space that allows students to build their confidence.

Generalize

Ask students, “How can this lesson help you?” **Let students answer.** Then say, “This lesson helps you recognize the power of your voice and how you can make an impact in your community, state, and world. Now what are the next steps for you to use your voice?”

Apply

Ask students, “How can you specifically empower others to become aware of how their voice also matters? Can you encourage others to become more informed on how government leaders/offices are working on these issues currently?” Lead discussion.

Then say, “This lesson also helps build students’ confidence in using your own voice and how you can be agents for positive change in every space you navigate – whether that is at school, during team sports, in your community, at church.”

Notes

References

Resource 1: Advocacy: The Heart of a Leader | The Practice Space practice-space.org/advocacy_guide/resource-1-advocacy-the-heart-of-a-leader/

TIPPS *Life Skills*

Head - Thinking

Heart - Relating, Caring

Hands - Working

Health - Being



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