



TALK BEFORE YOU VOTE (6-8)

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to understand how free speech facilitates the sharing of ideas in public and develop strategies to encourage others to discuss School Participatory Budgeting projects before voting.

STANDARDS:

- **6.C4.1** Explain challenges and opportunities people and groups face when solving local, regional, and/or global problems.
- **6.C4.2** Describe and apply civic virtues, including deliberative processes that contribute to the common good and democratic principles in school, community, and government.
- **7.C4.2** Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as a means of addressing public problems.
- **7.C4.3** Analyze the purpose, process, implementation, and consequences of decision making and public policies in multiple settings.
- **7.C4.4** Explain challenges people face and opportunities they create in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.
- **8.C1.2** Demonstrate civic virtues that contribute to the common good and democratic principles within a variety of deliberative processes and settings.
- **8.C1.3** Analyze the influence of personal interests and perspectives when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.
- **8.C1.4** Engage in projects to help or inform others such as community service and service-learning projects.

CIVICS EXAM QUESTIONS:

- What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment? **A:** Free Speech

TIMELINE: This lesson fits best during the Deliberation phase, between Campaigning and Voting, as a way to promote discussion, raise awareness, & deepen understanding of the proposals before voting takes place.

APPROXIMATE LESSON LENGTH: One 60-minute class period, plus additional time for planning deliberation process if needed.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

- [*First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*](#)
- [*Graphic Organizer: Talk Before You Vote*](#)
- Completed Project Proposal Details

VOCABULARY:

- Amendment
- Deliberation
- Free Speech
- Public

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Engage

- **Think-Pair-Share:**

- Pose the following questions to students to first individually reflect:
 - Have you ever changed your mind about something after hearing someone else's opinion?
 - What made you change your mind?
- Then have students partner with a peer to share their individual reflections on those questions.
- Bring students back together as a whole group. Invite students to share their own reflection or highlights from the paired conversation.

- Next, discuss the following questions as a class:

- Why is it important to hear different opinions before making a decision?
- What could happen if we only hear one side?

- Explain that free speech helps us hear new ideas and think in new ways. Emphasize that this is important when we're trying to make good decisions together.

2. Explore

- Display the text of the *First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution* for students to see. Provide time for students to read or review, while highlighting specific phrases and language for emphasis and clarification, or share the simplified summary:
 - *Simplified: "Congress can't make laws that take away our freedom of speech or the freedom of the press".*
- Ask students the following questions and foster a class discussion, encouraging students to draw upon the First Amendment language to help support their thoughts:
 - What role does the Constitution play in protecting free speech and the press?
 - Why do you think the Constitution protects free speech?
 - How can free speech help people make better choices when they vote?
 - What could go wrong if people only hear one voice or one opinion?

- Explain that in a democracy, it's important for people to share ideas and ask questions *before* making big decisions like voting for elected officials, judges, or on policy proposals (ballot propositions, referendums, etc.).

3. Explain

- Ask students to define the word 'deliberation.' Revisit the last question's phrasing, "using our voices in public, where others can hear ideas, ask questions, and share thoughtful opinions," to help guide their understanding. Arrive at a collective consensus on what 'deliberation' means.
- Explain to students that deliberation means talking with others about different sides of an idea so that everyone can think carefully before deciding. It's about helping others understand all of their options, not convincing them to agree with you.
- Link these concepts to the importance of using critical thinking, having an open mind, showing empathy, and practicing active listening when preparing to vote, just as in the School Participatory Budgeting process. Have students identify other essential practices for deliberation.
- Have the different project proposals from the School Participatory Budgeting process ready to share. For each proposal, have students complete the *Graphic Organizer: Talk Before You Vote* explaining the following points for each proposal:
 - Strengths/Benefits
 - Weaknesses/Concerns
 - Questions
 - How does it affect students
 - How does it affect other members of the school community
- After students analyze each proposal through the above prompts, highlight how each of them participated in a deliberation process. Invite students to share their notes from the graphic organizer with the whole group. This is designed to model deliberation for students as they listen, learn, and think together.

4. Elaborate

- Invite the students to brainstorm ideas on how they can help others in the school engage in these same kinds of deliberative conversations. List these ideas where all students can see.
- Discuss each idea's effectiveness in fostering deliberation and the practices identified earlier (critical thinking, empathy, open-mindedness, active listening, etc.). Have students agree on a single method and develop a plan for implementing it. Students will need to consider the following questions.
 - Who would be the intended audience?

- What materials would be needed?
- Who will need to be contacted for help or permission?
- What information will need to be included?
- How can the deliberation activity be fair and helpful for everyone?
- What are the goals of this deliberation activity?

5. Evaluate

- **Four Corners:** This activity invites students to reflect on the deliberation process by selecting the aspect they find most meaningful or thought provoking to explore further.
- Label each corner of the classroom with the following questions:
 - How can free speech help our school make better decisions?
 - What's the difference between helping people understand and trying to convince them?
 - Why is it important to hear more than one side before we vote?
 - What's one step I can take to help others talk about our PB projects?
- Instruct students to read the questions and walk to the corner they wish to explore in more depth.
- **Small Group Reflection:** In the corners, students will discuss their perspectives, ideas, and questions. Groups will select one student to share out highlights from the discussion.