

Get on the Bus

Speaking Your Cause



Grades 6 – 12

Objective To identify a topic about which students feel strongly, express their opinion, and develop a call to action for others.

Materials Access to technology for online research
Paper, magazines, scissors, glue, markers or a digital collage medium such as Publisher or Canva
Paper and pencil/pen

Background

More and more in recent years, youth are engaging in forms of activism, taking a stand on issues about which they feel passionate. Youth have important perspectives that can be missed when highly-charged issues are discussed solely from an adult lens. This lesson gives students the opportunity to explore and identify issues they have strong feelings about, then to take those feelings and translate them into art and action, both for themselves and others.

Lesson Procedure

1.) Research/Brainstorm

Using online resources or group discussions, generate a list of issues in your school or community, or more widely in the state, nation, or the world. Generate a list of issues or causes with a partner or group. Briefly discuss the background and the perspectives on the issues as they arise.

Possible examples include:

- Climate change
- Animal adoption
- Bullying
- Homelessness
- Gender Equality

2.) Defining Terms

Activism - A doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. ***Taking action to address something about which you feel strongly.***

Call to Action - Something such as a speech, piece of writing, or act that encourages people to take action about a problem. ***Your direction or challenge to others to help address the issue.***

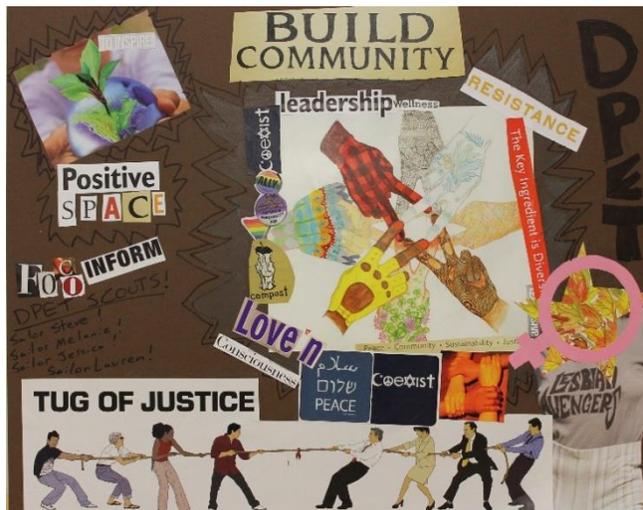
3.) Identify Your Cause

Select one cause from the list about which you feel strongly. Consider the following questions as you identify your cause:

- Which topic are you interested in or curious about?
- Which topic do you have strong opinions or thoughts about?
- Which topic(s) do you have personal experience with?

4.) Create Your Mood Board

Collect images that reflect the issue and how you feel about it. Consider ways to represent the issue through the visual art elements of color, shape, texture, and line. Then use your visual art materials or a digital collage program to create a collage that incorporates these elements. Here are some examples of mood boards created by students:



5.) Develop a Call to Action

Identify a way in which others can engage or support on this issue. Turn this call to action into a sentence with a strong verb, and print it nicely to accompany the collage.

- Climate change – Reduce/reuse/recycle more items
- Animal adoption – Adopt pets from Humane Society or rescues rather than pet stores
- Bullying – Spread more kindness to others



6.) Theatre Extension: Part I (Optional)

Using two sides of a piece of paper (or one side divided into two equal parts) fill one section with facts that are current and true about the issue you have selected. In the other section, answer the prompt “If I had it my way...” and how the situation would be different if you have “your way.”

Possible examples:

- Climate change – icebergs are melting into the ocean/ “If I had it my way, the polar regions would remain intact.”
- Animal adoption – puppy mill dogs live in inhumane conditions/ “If I had it my way, all animals would live in safe and healthy environments.”
- Bullying – students name-call others in the hallways/ “If I had it my way, people would only use kind words.”

7.) Theatre Extension: Part II (Optional)

Write a monologue – a speech delivered to the audience by one person – addressing the current status of the issue, then conclude with a passage explaining “If I had it my way.”

The following sample is only a few sentences. Full monologues are about 1 minute long. As you write, draw inspiration from your own experiences and why you are passionate about your issue.

- *Bullying – Students in my school call each other hurtful names in the hallways. I see the side eye and the way they scrunch their noses in disdain at those they see as “nerdy” or “geeky” or less worthy than they. The way they shout insults and hide behind screen names. But guess what? All people are worthy of love. All people have feelings and hopes and dreams... and NO ONE deserves to be bullied. If I had it my way, people would be kind and treat others the way that they would want to be treated.*

8.) Reflect

- What emotions did you experience while brainstorming/researching issues?
- Why did you choose the specific images in your collage? How are color, shape and texture featured in your collage?
- Explain how you came to choose your specific Call to Action? Were there other actions you considered?
- If you wrote a monologue, what was it like to address this topic in a personal way?
- How might this process help inspire change for a person or community?

Tips for at home application:

1. Utilize a video chat app or video conference platform to do this lesson with others and/or share your mood board or monologue with friends. Post pictures of your mood board or a reading of your monologue and tag Tacoma Arts Live.
2. Parents can create a mood board and monologue too! Each person in the house could choose their own issue and create their own mood board, monologue, and call to action.