

## Lesson 8: Every Voice Matters

**Grade Level:** K-5

**Objective:** Students will learn the importance of listening to others' ideas, connect this to the First Amendment, and use their voices to share ideas for positive change.

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### Focus Skills

**Engaging in Civil Discourse** Engaging in civil discourse involves understanding how to express ideas respectfully, even when opinions differ. By listening and sharing their own voices, students are learning the foundation of respectful conversation and debate, which is key to democracy.

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### Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
  - Pre-cut paper leaves or shapes
  - Simplified First Amendment text:  
*"Everyone has the right to speak, share ideas, and be listened to."*
  - Pre-cut paper leaves (enough for each student)
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### Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the importance of listening to different voices and opinions.
  - Recognize how their voice can contribute to making their classroom or community better.
  - Reflect on how respecting diverse ideas builds fairness and understanding.
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### Introduction (5 Minutes)

1. **Discussion Prompt:** "Why is it important to listen to each other?"
    - Write student answers on the board.
    - Encourage them to think about how listening can lead to better ideas, solve problems, and help everyone feel included.
  2. Define "voice" as not just speaking words, but also sharing ideas, feelings, and needs.
  3. Ask: "How do you feel when someone actively listens to what you have to say?"
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### Reading Time (15 Minutes)

Read *The Power of a Voice* aloud.

## "The Power of a Voice"

Ben was a boy who loved to build things. One day, his class was asked to create a new design for their school playground. Ben wanted to build a treehouse, but not everyone agreed. "It's too high!" said Mia. "We should build something on the ground." "I want swings!" added Sam. The class couldn't decide. Ben felt frustrated, but then he had an idea. "Let's listen to everyone's ideas and find a way to make them all work!" he said. The class worked together to plan a playground that included swings, a treehouse, and a slide. When it was finished, it was the best playground they'd ever seen. Ben learned that listening to every voice can help us find solutions that make everyone happy.

- **Discussion Questions:**

- Why was it important for Ben to listen to the ideas of others?
  - Can you think of a time when listening helped you work better with others?
  - How does including everyone's voice make things better for a group?
  - What does active listening look like? (Answers may include raising your hand to speak, not interrupting someone when they are sharing ideas, using silent signals like a thumbs-up to show support, or saying, "I'd like to add to that idea.")
  - What doesn't active listening look like? (Answers may include talking over someone, ignoring what they say, or interrupting before they finish sharing.)
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### Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

- **Introduce the First Amendment:**

**Simplified Text:**

*"The First Amendment says everyone has the right to speak, share ideas, and be listened to. It protects the freedom of speech and helps people work together to solve problems."*

**Discuss:** The First Amendment protects everyone's right to share their voice. How does respecting others' ideas help us work together?

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Just like listening and sharing ideas in person helps us work together to solve problems, there are other ways to use your voice to inspire change. Sometimes, people express their ideas in writing, art, or other creative ways to make their message heard.

Let's explore how we can use our voices in a powerful, visual way to create positive change.

### Activity: "Voice of Change" Billboard Design (15 Minutes)

**Objective:** Students will express how their voices can create positive change by designing a "billboard" that represents an issue or idea they want to improve in their school or community.

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### Materials Needed:

- Large white poster paper or cardboard
- Markers, crayons, and colored pencils

- Magazines (optional for cut-out images)
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## Instructions:

### 1. Introduction (2 Minutes):

- Explain that just like advertisements or public service announcements use billboards to share important messages, students will create their own billboards to share a message about how they can use their voice to make a positive change.
- Briefly discuss examples of positive changes they could focus on, like kindness, respect, helping the environment, and resolving conflicts.

### 2. Billboard Creation (8 Minutes):

- Give each student a piece of poster paper.
- Ask them to think of one small way they can use their voice to make a positive change. This could be something like:
  - “Be kind to others.”
  - “Pick up litter to keep our school clean.”
  - “Stand up for others when they’re being bullied.”
- Have students draw and decorate their billboard with bold text and images that represent their message.
  - For example, a student who chose “Pick up litter” might draw a trash can with a smiling face or a clean park.
- If available, students can cut out pictures from magazines or use other materials to enhance their design.

### 3. Gallery Walk (5 Minutes):

- Once the students finish their billboards, set them up around the classroom or along the walls.
- Have a "gallery walk" where students walk around the room to view each other's designs.
- Ask them to think about how each message could help make a positive change.

### 4. Class Reflection (3 Minutes):

- Ask students:
  - “What message did you want to convey with your billboard?”
  - “How can your message make a difference in our community?”
  - “What did you like about the billboards your classmates made?”

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## Closing and Reflection (5-10 Minutes)

- Discuss how sharing and listening helps create fairness and understanding.
  - Challenge students: “This week, try to use your voice to make a positive difference or show respect by listening to someone else’s ideas.”
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**Peer Assessment:** Students give compliments or feedback during the gallery walk, practicing active listening and responding skills.

**Self-Assessment:** Provide checklists for students to reflect on their participation:

- "Did I share my ideas?"
- "Did I listen to others?"
- "How did I feel during the activity?"

**Suggested Booklist: Every Voice Matters**

- Sofia Valdez, Future Prez by Andrea Beaty
- Sharice's Big Voice: A Native Kid Becomes a Congresswoman by Sharice Davids
- Say Something! by Peter H. Reynolds
- Something, Someday by Amanda Gorman
- Change Sings: A Children's Anthem by Amanda Gorman
- The Activist by Nikkolas Smith