

The Power to Persuade

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help students develop public speaking skills. Students will be asked to analyze the content of their bills, prepare oral presentations, and make modifications based on peer and teacher feedback. Completed student-authored bill is a pre-requisite of this lesson.

Key Words:

constituent

legislation

persuasive speech

Materials Provided:

- 1) Handouts
 - a) *Developing Your Powers of Persuasion*
 - b) *Selling Your Bill*
 - c) *Peer Feedback Form*
- 2) Copies of congressional speech: Senator Charles Robb of Virginia

Procedure:

- 1) **Warm Up:** Working individually or in small groups have students complete *Developing Your Powers of Persuasion*. This should help students think about strategies to use in persuasive speaking.
- 2) Students may begin this lesson after completing the final draft of their legislation.
- 3) Ask students to read through the lesson, *Selling Your Bill*. Questions and activities are included with this lesson and students should be directed to complete those.
- 4) Students may work on this lesson in class individually or with a partner. This lesson can also be completed outside of class time.
- 5) At the conclusion of the lesson, students should be directed to begin work on their class presentation. Five to eight minutes per presentation gives the student(s) time to provide background information, explain the core of their bill and to answer questions by their peers. Students may work in small groups to evaluate one another's speeches using the attached peer feedback form.

Developing Your Powers of Persuasion

Read each of the following situations carefully. Record your answers to each of the questions and be prepared to share your responses with your classmates.

Situation One: You and your classmates would like your school to sponsor a trip to Washington, DC. How can you persuade your principal that this trip is a good idea?

- *What are two objections your principal might have to this trip?*
- *How can you respond to each of these objections?*

Situation Two: You notice a group of classmates teasing and harassing a much younger student. This student is clearly getting very upset. How can you persuade them to stop?

- *What are two negative reactions your classmates might have to your intervention?*
- *How can you prevent such negative reactions?*

Situation Three: You and a group of friends would like to go to a movie on Saturday night. You don't have a car of your own, but sometimes your parents let you borrow theirs. How will you persuade your parents to let you borrow the car?

- *What are two reasons your parents might give for you not using the car?*
- *How can you be prepared to address each of these concerns?*

Based on these situations, what are three ways anyone giving a persuasive speech can prepare?

1)

2)

3)

Selling Your Bill

Public Speaking Guidelines

Public speaking is an important skill for a delegate since there are many demands on them to share their ideas and persuade others of their views. Delegates also need strong public speaking skills when presenting their bill. Your goal during your presentation to your delegation is to inform and defend the merits of your bill and to persuade them to support it with their vote. Use the public speaking guidelines below to help you prepare for your oral presentation.

Know Your Content

- ~ Research your bill as exhaustively as possible
- ~ Know your side of the issue as well as opposing positions
- ~ Organize your thoughts into a problem, solution and benefits
- ~ Be persuasive by appealing to the needs of your audience
- ~ Include visual aides such as charts and graphs to show projections for the future

How to improve the content of your presentation

- ~ Read it aloud to yourself and ask the following questions
 - Does it make sense?
 - Is it persuasive?
 - Is your message clear?

- ~ Read the speech given by former Virginia Senator Chuck Robb and answer the following questions.
 - How does he begin the speech and why is his approach effective?
 - What type of persuasive language does he use in his speech?
 - Can you apply either of the observations made above to your speech?

Senate Chambers March 28, 2000

...Mr. President, when I came home from Vietnam a little over thirty years ago, I came home to a nation divided. I was assigned by the U.S. Marine Corps to head up a major officer recruiting program on college campuses all across America. It was 1969 and anti-war fever was consuming the nation. As you can imagine, my Marine uniform on a college campus became a lightning rod for protests and protesters. In this assignment, Mr. President, incoming bullets, rockets and artillery were replaced by insults, jeers and demonstrations...

But Mr. President, I rise today to defend the rights of those individuals 30 years ago to protest me and my uniform. Freedom of speech is the foundation of our democracy--and silencing that speech would have been against everything I had fought for in Vietnam. To paraphrase an old saying: I didn't agree with what they said. But I had been willing to die to protect their right to say it.

Mr. President, I am repulsed by any individual who would burn the flag of my country to convey a message of dissent. It is an act I abhor and can barely comprehend. But in the democracy that our forefathers founded, and that generations of Americans have fought and

died to preserve, I simply do not have the right to decide how another individual expresses his or her political views. I can abhor those political views, but I cannot imprison someone for expressing them. That's a fundamental tenet of democracies and it's what makes America the envy of the world, as the home of the free and the brave.

Last week, I received an e-mail from a retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel from Virginia. Like many Americans (and many American veterans), he had struggled with this issue and searched his conscience for what's right. In his message to me, he said: "I have seen our flag torn in battle, captured by our enemies, and trampled on by protesters. In all those events I never felt that the American way of life was in grave peril... for whenever our flag fell or was destroyed there was always another Marine to step forward and pull a replacement from his helmet or ruck sack."

He continued: "The Constitution is the bedrock of America, the nation... the people. It is not possible to pull another such document from our national ruck sack.' We have but one Constitution, and it should be the object of our protection..."

...Mr. President, since speech that enjoys the support of the majority is never likely to be limited, the Bill of Rights, by its very design, protects the rights of a minority in key areas that the founders held dear. And it is the freedom to dissent peacefully that separates the greatest democracy the world has ever known from other regimes like those in China, Cuba, Iraq, and others where political dissent has been met with imprisonment and sometimes death.

If we reach past our natural anger and disgust for a few publicity-hungry flag-burners, we know in our hearts that a great nation like ours, a nation that defends liberty all over the world, should not imprison individuals who exercise their right to political dissent. And we know in our hearts that a few repulsive flag-burners pose no real danger to a nation as great as ours.

Mr. President, I want that flag to be the proud symbol of a nation that is truly free. And for it to be that proud symbol, we must also protect the sacred freedoms placed in the first amendment of the Constitution by our forefathers.

I say that because the flag represents freedom to me. But the first amendment guarantees that freedom. And when we seek to punish those who express views we don't share, then we--not the flag burners--we begin to erode the very values, the very freedoms, that make America the greatest democracy the world has ever known. I support our flag, and the republic for which it stands. But I cannot, with the faith I have in that republic, support this constitutional amendment.

Vary Your Voice

- ~ Volume - Be sure you can be heard without shouting
- ~ Tone - Your voice tone may represent enthusiasm, fear, sorrow or another emotion. Be sure you are using a tone appropriate to your presentation
- ~ Pitch - Is your voice too high or too low? Can you manipulate it for clearer understanding and fewer distractions?
- ~ Pace - Speak slowly so your audience can understand your message

How to improve your voice

- ~ Listen to your voice!
- ~ Practice your presentation and monitor your voice

~ Tape your presentation and evaluate your voice for volume, tone, pitch and pace

Maintain

~ Eye contact

- Maintain eye contact with your audience in order to communicate your interest in their ideas and a willingness to engage them in conversation

Positive

~ Facial Expression

- Smile when appropriate to convey warmth and comfort with your topic.

Posture

~ Gestures

- Balance your use of gestures. Too many wild gestures may be a distraction from your message and too few may seem stiff and unnatural.

How to improve your posture

Practice reading your presentation three times. It will be helpful to practice with a partner or in front of a mirror in order to receive immediate feedback.

- During the **first** reading, focus on making eye contact.
- During the **second**, be aware of your facial expressions.
- On the third reading pay attention to your gestures.

Making Your Case

a. Opening Statements

- i. States the purpose of your piece of legislation
- ii. Clears up any confusing vocabulary at the beginning of debate
- iii. States your opinion or why you wrote the bill
- iv. Is clear and concise

b. Closing Statement

- i. Clears up any confusion caused by people speaking out on your bill
- ii. Restates pivotal points
- iii. Responds to untrue statements made by legislators
- iv. Is clear and concise

c. Bill FAQ Sheet

- i. Write down all of the commonly asked questions about your bill and to come up with good answers to those questions so that you can be prepared in the future
- ii. Keep it in front of you during debate so that you can reference it quickly.