



Photo by Thắng-Nhật Trần on Pexels

Design A Powerful PSA

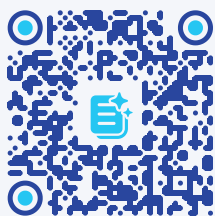
📖 Language Arts • ⌚ 30 min • 🎓 Ages 12-15 • Grade 8

This challenge empowers learners to become agents of change by crafting a compelling Public Service Announcement. Students will identify a real-world issue, develop a persuasive message, and use creativity to communicate it effectively.

Our goal is for your child to identify key elements of persuasive communication and rhetoric, develop a clear, concise, and compelling message for a target audience, and create and deliver an impactful public service announcement using spoken word and simple visual aids.

What You Need

Paper • Markers • Hat • Blanket • Book • Bottle • Household Items



Scan To Personalize

Every child learns differently, and this is just the baseline.

Scan to jump into the app and easily personalize this Spark to match your child's exact learning level and see how Mai will guide this lesson.



Questions or ideas? We'd love to hear from you at mai@mai.school

Learning Guide

A simple guide to lead you through the kickoff, the core challenge, and everything in between.

Mai's Tips

1. Encourage your child to use their voice! Tone, volume, and pace can be just as persuasive as the words themselves.
 2. Suggest starting with a powerful 'hook' – a question, a surprising fact, or an emotional appeal – to immediately grab the audience's attention.
-

Prep Before Session 10 Min

- Gather paper and markers.
- Find a few common household items like a hat, blanket, book, or bottle.
- Have a few examples of well-known PSAs (e.g., 'This is your brain on drugs', 'Smokey Bear says only you can prevent wildfires') ready to show on a device if needed.



Photo by Thắng-Nhật Trần on Pexels

1 Introduction 5 Min

- Introduce the concept of a Public Service Announcement (PSA). Explain that a PSA is a message designed to inform and persuade people about a social issue for the public good, like ads for recycling or anti-smoking campaigns. Knowing what a PSA is helps us understand how to create positive change. Ask your child what kinds of issues they care about or have noticed in your community.
- Now, ask these questions to get them thinking:
- "Can you think of a message you've seen or heard – like on TV, a poster, or online – that really made you feel strongly or want to do something?"
- "What was it about that message that made it powerful or stuck with you?"

Know before you teach

- **Good to know:** Public Service Announcements often use emotional appeals, logical arguments, or both, to motivate people.
- PSAs can be found in many forms beyond traditional ads, like social media campaigns, school posters, or community events.
- The goal of a PSA is to inspire public action or change, not to sell a product.
- **It's working when:** The child recalls a specific message and can describe what made it memorable to them.

- **If they're stuck:** Show a short, well-known PSA video clip (e.g., a classic 'Smokey Bear' ad) and ask what message it conveys.
- **Easier:** Provide two clear examples of a message for public good (like a recycling poster) and a regular advertisement, and ask them to pick which one is the PSA.
- **Harder:** Ask them to identify one specific technique (like a catchy phrase or a strong image) that made their example powerful.



Done when: Student identifies an example of a persuasive message and reflects on its impact.



Photo by Pixabay on Pexels

2 Explore & Plan 8 Min

- Help your child brainstorm a local issue they genuinely care about. This could be something like recycling, helping a local animal shelter, promoting kindness at school, or conserving water. Encourage them to pick one issue.
- Ask these questions to help them choose:
- "What local issues do you feel strongly about, and why?"
- "If you could tell everyone in our community one thing about this issue, what would it be?"

- Once an issue is chosen, discuss what simple household items they could use as props or visual aids from around the house. Help them gather paper, markers, and these chosen household items, such as a hat, blanket, book, or bottle, which can be effective communication tools.

Know before you teach

- **Good to know:** Local issues often feel more immediate and solvable, which can be empowering for a young person.
- **If they ask:** Does the issue have to be super serious? No, it just needs to be an issue where a positive change or action is desired for your community, big or small.
- **It's working when:** The child articulates a personal connection or reason for choosing a particular issue.
- **If they're stuck:** Offer a pre-selected list of three local issues (e.g., 'picking up litter at the park', 'thanking essential workers', 'reading more books') and ask them to choose one.
- **Easier:** Pre-select one household item and ask them to think of ways to use just that item.
- **Harder:** Ask them to explain **why** their chosen issue is important to the community and what specific impact they hope their PSA will have.



Done when: Student has chosen an issue for their PSA and has gathered materials for brainstorming and presentation.



3 Discussion 6 Min

- Guide the discussion on key persuasive elements. First, introduce "Target Audience" – this is the specific group of people you want to reach with your message (e.g., parents, kids, everyone). Knowing your audience helps tailor your message. Then, introduce "Call to Action" – this is the specific thing you want people to **do** after seeing your PSA (e.g., recycle, donate, be kind). It gives people a concrete way to act on your message.
- Now, ask:
- "Who exactly are you trying to reach with your PSA? Who is your target audience?"
- "What's the single most important thing you want them to understand or **do** after seeing your message? What's your call to action?"
- "How can you make that message stick in their minds, using both words and maybe some clever visuals?"

Know before you teach

- **Good to know:** A clearly defined target audience helps ensure the message is designed to resonate with the specific group it needs to influence.
- A strong call to action provides clear, actionable steps, moving the audience from awareness to participation.

- Persuasive messages often use a combination of facts and emotional appeals to convince an audience.
- **If they ask:** What if I want to reach everyone? While your message might be for everyone, thinking about a specific group first can help you make the message clearer and more impactful, then you can broaden it.
- **It's working when:** The child clearly names a specific group as their target audience and states a single, direct action.
- **If they're stuck:** Provide a fill-in-the-blank sentence: 'I want [target audience] to [call to action] about [issue].'
- **Easier:** Give them two options for a simple call to action (e.g., 'recycle more' or 'join a clean-up day') and ask them to pick one.
- **Harder:** Ask them to consider what common objections or reasons their target audience might have for **not** taking action, and how their PSA could address those.



Done when: Student can articulate their PSA's target audience, main message, and desired action.



4 Activity 9 Min

- Provide a designated space for your child to work. Have them use their paper and markers to outline their script, key points, or visual ideas for their short, impactful PSA (aim for no more than 60 seconds). Encourage them to think about how to integrate the household items they gathered as props.
- Now, ask these questions to spark their creativity:
- "How can you use your voice and body to make your message even stronger?"
- "What's one simple prop you can use to help explain your idea without saying a word?"
- Encourage them to practice their delivery, experimenting with different tones of voice or gestures. Remind them that simple props like a hat, blanket, book, or bottle can often convey powerful meanings. Offer to be their audience when they're ready to deliver their PSA.

Know before you teach

- **Good to know:** Non-verbal communication, like facial expressions, gestures, and body posture, can greatly enhance or contradict a message.
- Practicing delivery helps build confidence and allows for refinement of the message's impact.

- Props can serve as visual metaphors, simplifying complex ideas or adding emotional weight to a message.
- **If they ask:** Do I really have to perform it? Yes, performing helps you practice sharing your idea powerfully, which is key to making a difference with your message.
- **Key words: Script/Outline** A written plan or main points for your PSA, like a short list of what you'll say or show.
- **It's working when:** The child is actively moving or using their voice in different ways to convey their message.
- **If they're stuck:** Suggest they only focus on delivering one powerful sentence or showing how to use one prop effectively.
- **Easier:** Instead of performing, focus on creating a visual storyboard with drawings for each part of their PSA.
- **Harder:** Challenge them to incorporate a moment of silence or a specific sound effect into their PSA to create emphasis.



Done when: Student has created a short PSA script/outline, gathered props, and delivered their message.



5 Summary 2 Min

- Celebrate your child's effort and creativity in designing their PSA. Discuss what they learned about the power of communication and how their PSA could be used in the real world.

- Ask them to reflect:
- "What was the most challenging part of getting your message across clearly and persuasively?"
- "What did you learn today about how to convince people to pay attention and take action?"
- "How might your PSA make a real difference, even a small one?"

Know before you teach

- **Good to know:** Reflecting on a creative process helps solidify learning and can reveal new insights about communication.
- Understanding the challenges of clear and persuasive communication helps build critical thinking skills.
- Every act of communication, even a small one, has the potential to influence and contribute to change.
- **Key words: Takeaway** The main point or lesson you learned from an experience.
- **It's working when:** The child articulates a specific learning point about communication or persuasion.
- **If they're stuck:** Ask them to name one thing they found easy or one thing they found difficult about making their PSA.
- **Easier:** Ask them to simply name one emotion they felt while creating their PSA.
- **Harder:** Ask them to brainstorm one other platform (e.g., social media post, school announcement, written letter) where their PSA's message could be shared effectively.



Done when: Student shares one key takeaway or insight from creating their PSA.

Beyond The Spark

Fuel their curiosity beyond the Spark with bonus extras.

Table Talk



The ability to persuade and communicate effectively is essential for careers in marketing, advocacy, journalism, and public policy.

Did You Know?



Everyday objects can reveal surprising science when we slow down and observe them.

Challenge



Create a 'PSA blooper reel' where you intentionally make mistakes to highlight what NOT to do in a persuasive message, or try to convince someone of a silly, made-up 'problem'.

★ Quick Recap Quiz 4 Min

Customize this quiz, add questions, or follow your child's lead! Each question has a 'Parent Tip' to help them find the answer without giving it away.

1. What Is The Main Goal Of A Public Service Announcement (PSA)?

- ☐ To sell a new product or service.
- ☒ To raise awareness and encourage action for a cause.

 PSAs are about public good, not sales. Think about common issues.

2. Which Of These Is Most Important For A Persuasive Message To Be Effective?

- ☐ Many complex, scientific ideas.
- ☒ A clear call to action.

 People need to know what you want them to do.

3. If You Want To Persuade People About The Harm Of Littering, What Would Be An Effective Prop?

- ☐ A brand new, shiny toy.
- ☒ A crumpled plastic bottle or food wrapper.

 Props should directly relate to your message.

4. Why Is Practicing Your PSA Important Before Presenting It?

- ✗ To memorize every single word perfectly, without any improvisation.
- ✓ To ensure your message is clear, confident, and impactful.



Practice helps you connect with your audience, not just recite words.



Scan For More

Loved This Spark?

Scan to jump into the app and explore similar Sparks in our Sparks Hub. **New to Mai?** Start free with 10 Sparks, no credit card needed.

