**Title/Topic of Lesson:** Exercising Civic Responsibility: Interviewing public officials in the community.

**Authors:** Eric Milis, Alton Kuhn

**Subject/Grade Level:** 7th Grade Civics

**Duration:** Three 50 Minute Periods

**Essential “Guiding Question” for the Lesson:**

How do our public officials help our community?

Why are public officials/local politics important?

How does media portray the importance of public officials to citizens?

What is Civic Responsibility?

**Florida Sunshine State Standards Addressed in this Lesson:**

**»**SS.7.C.2.3: Experience the responsibilities of citizens at the local, state, or federal levels

**»**SS.7.C.3.14: Differentiate between local, state, and federal governments' obligations and services

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

* The student will be able to identify local public offices and the official who occupies the office.
* Students will demonstrate their understanding of different offices and the importance of local politics by writing interview questions and conducting interviews with public officials about local issues.
* Students will be able to explain the connection between media and elected officials.
* Students will be able to list at least 10 Civic Responsibilities good citizens should have.
* Students will demonstrate the ability to use different forms of media to conduct research as a responsible citizen.

**LESSON CONTENT**

Civic Responsibility is a vague term that carries with it a large amount of meaning, it is important that our young students understand what Civic Responsibility entails and how to be a responsible citizen in the community. Civic responsibility starts at the local level and in order to be responsible citizens, students must be aware of the local offices and what they do. School Board officials, Police officers (especially the Sherriff or Chief of Police), Judges, City Commissioners, and Mayors are all positions of great importance in any community with jobs and duties that directly affect members of the community. As Social Studies teachers it is our duty to inform students about civic responsibility, while urging them to be actively participating citizens as well. In this lesson students will engage with different officials who we have arranged Skype/phone interviews with and deepen their understanding about local offices, who occupies the office, and get direct responses from our elected officials about what our Civic Responsibilities are. Students will also ask how media helps or hurts their ability to do their job the bets they can. Students will inquire about different types of media and how it connects their work with citizens in the community.

**STUDENT GROUPING:**

Students will work in groups of three in order to conserve the time of the public officials who have kindly offered to participate in this activity. The instructor will ensure that every student in each group has a role, so that no student will be uninvolved and not reap the benefits of this activity.

**METHODS:**

*Direct Instruction:* The teacher will lecture briefly to the students introducing them to the public offices they will be engaging with and the officials who occupy each office. This is important because students need to know the background of the offices and people they will be researching.

*Group Research:* Groups will research information about issues concerning each office, in order to produce their interview questions. Students will present their questions for approval by the teacher prior to their interview. Students will be guided in their research by being provided a list of websites to look at, such as the city of Gainesville, YouTube for ads, and local news sites for opinion columns and blogs. It is important for students to encounter the different types of media in order to get their information so that when they are voting age citizens they are able to consult an array of sources.

*Interactive Learning:* Students will learn firsthand by interacting via Skype/phone interviews with public officials. The students will do this step in order to obtain the information regarding the issues discussed in their research questions as well as learning how to use Skype, another useful form of media.

*Student Artifact*: Students will be authentically assessed by creating a children’s book summarizing what they have learned and how public officials, civic responsibilities, and citizens all work together. By creating an artifact students will demonstrate their understanding of how to research topics and the information they obtained through their interviews.

**ACTIVITIES:**

* **Opening**
	+ Students will enter the room and their Bellwork will be posted on the board. They are to list as many different jobs people can hold in a city’s government. The teacher will then go over some of these positions with the class to make sure each student has the correct responses and knows who and why officials in a city’s government are there.
	+ The teacher will continue with a lecture on civic responsibility and what makes a good citizen. The teacher will also tie in how media helps bridge the gap between what elected officials do and how it is presented for citizens to understand. This is the time students should ask as many questions as possible and the teacher will be facilitating a focused discussion about elected officials and our Civic Responsibilities.
* **Main** Activity or Activities
	+ Students will then be divided into specific groups, and be assigned to a pre-determined figure in the community that the teacher has contacted prior to this activity. The individual will have agreed to participate in this activity and will be anticipating interview questions from the students. A first year teacher might have difficulty, but with experience the teacher can network in the community and truly connect meaningful learning with students’ lives.
	+ In their groups, students will use the classroom computers (or computer lab) and research their designated official in order to find quality background information to ask meaningful and focused questions interview questions. The students will compose a list of at least 5 questions they wish to ask. After students have made their own questions, the teacher will provide the students with a list of questions the students MUST ask.
	+ Day 2– students will take the entire period to conduct interviews with their assigned officials. These interviews can be done via Skype, telephone, or even in person depending on the availability of the official. The teacher should make sure the official is able to meet during the selected time, if not the students can schedule to conduct the interview at a better time or even meet in person!
* **Closing**
	+ The students will conclude the activity on the third and final day by completing a story book as their evaluation/assessment. Those who wish to share their stories can read their books aloud to the class for extra credit!
* **Important Questions to Ask**

1. What is an elected official? What are some of the positions in our community that elected officials hold?

2. Why are elected officials important for our community?

3. What is “Civic Responsibility” and what are a few examples of it?

4. How does media help public officials do their job better?

5. In what ways do you interact with the media to understand our local government?

**MATERIALS:**

* Internet Access for web research
* Laptops for Skype interviews
* Phones for phone interviews
* Paper, stapler, and colored pencils for children’s books
* We have chosen these materials because it is easier for the officials to speak to students over Skype or the phone rather than take a field trip to each official’s office.

**EVALUATION:**

The following day, the students will be authentically assessed and be tasked with creating a children’s book detailing all they have learned. It is a civic duty in itself to teach the younger generation the importance of civics, so this will be an excellent exercise for the 7th grade class to write to their (real or imaginary) younger friends/family. The requirements and rubric for the assessment are below. We have chosen this approach to evaluate because it allows students to have fun and summarize what they have learned without actually realizing they are practicing their summarization skills.

What Does It Mean To Be A Citizen?

PART I - List

 Come up with a list of the most important responsibilities of an effective citizen. You can include aspects of civic duty, public responsibilities, and civic virtue. You have learned many aspects regarding citizenship in this class so this should not be too difficult to only list 10. You may use your notes and previous assignments to reflect on what we have covered and what you have learned this year. Remember: you must come up with a MINIMUM of 10 items for your list.

PART II- Rough Draft

 Next, come up with a rough draft of a short story using unique characters to explain why these are the 10 most important responsibilities of an effective citizen. You do not have to create a detailed story yet. I do not want you to do a lot of work and then realize it was not correct, this is just an informal look to see if you are on the right track.

In one paragraph, explain to me:

* What is the general plot
* The setting
* 3 characters you have conceived so far

I will come by and read these when you raise your hand, if I approve that you are on the right track I will give you colored pencils and paper so you can begin Part III.

PART III – Children’s Book

 Now comes the fun part! You are to create a children’s book that explains what you believe are the 10 most important responsibilities and aspects of an effective citizen. It does not have to be a countdown or be in order of importance; you just have to have the 10 things you picked dispersed throughout your story. Your main character can be you, a famous person, or even an animal! You can use any perspective (1st or 3rd person).

The children’s book must:

* Have a title and cover
* Have the 10 items from your list
* Have at least 5 unique characters
* Be at least 15 pages, please number them
* Be hand drawn and hand written
* Do NOT simply list 10 things, there has to be a plot!

-What might make this easier is to think how you might explain this to a little brother or sister who is in elementary school.

-The purpose of this whole assignment is for you to show me how much you learned and what you took away from this class and found meaningful. I am not grading based on artistic talent, all I want is to see that you can tell an effective story using what we have learned in class.

BE CREATIVE AND HAVE FUN!

“What Does It Mean To Be A Citizen?” Rubric

NAME:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

PART I

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | 10 Points | 5 Points | 0 Points | Total |
| List at least 10 important responsibilities of an effective citizen | Has listed 10 or more important responsibilities of an effective citizen | Has listed 6-9 important responsibilities of an effective citizen | Has listed 0-5 important responsibilities of an effective citizen | \_\_\_/10 |

PART II

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | 15 Points | 10 Points | 5 Points | 0 Points | Total |
| Write at least a paragraph of a rough draft that includes a general plot, setting, and 3 characters | Has written at least a paragraph of a rough draft that includes a general plot, setting, and 3 characters | Has written at least a paragraph of a rough draft but is missing one of the following: general plot, setting, or 3 characters | Has written at least a paragraph of a rough draft but is missing two of the following: a general plot, setting, or 3 characters | Has written less than a paragraph and is missing two of the following: a general plot, setting, or 3 characters | \_\_\_/15 |

PART III

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | 75 Points | 50 Points | 25 Points | 0 Points | Total |
| Title & Cover10 Items5 Characters15 Pages | Title & Cover10 Items5 Characters15 Pages | Title & Cover7-9 Items3-4 Characters11-14 Pages | Title & Cover5-6 Items2 Characters6-10 Pages | Title & cover0-4 Items1 Character1-5 Pages | \_\_\_/75 |

FINAL SCORE: \_\_\_/100