

Lesson: Reporter's Notebook

Connecting Language Arts to Civics

Students will research their local government officials through the *Kids Corner* site. Each student will write a letter to one government official and present questions that he or she would like to have answered. Students will report their findings to the class to build a deeper understanding of the ways that county government officials serve the community. This lesson should be taught before participating in the *County Chronicles* project.

Grade Levels: 3rd - 8th

Objectives

Students will learn the names of their county government officials.

Students will learn about their officials' jobs by researching on the computer and asking questions in a letter that they will post or email.

Students will construct a letter that will include questions that they have formulated about the government officials' job.

Students will report all of their research findings to the rest of the class.

Students will construct thank you notes to send to their officials.

Time: two – three class sessions (approx.)

Materials

Computers with internet access

Reporter's Notebook worksheet

Government Officials Word Search (download from *Kids' Corner* section)

Procedure:

1. Reflect back on the brainstormed lists created at the beginning of the *Everyday Government* lesson. If you chose not to teach this lesson, then complete the initial steps from the lesson:
 - a. Begin lesson by brainstorming on chart paper all of the people that help to make the school run efficiently. Make a "T chart" with the names and/or job title on one side and a simple job description on the other.
 - b. Extend the thinking of these important jobs to the community. Make another "T chart" for local government positions and agencies. Refer back to the school chart for ideas and brainstorm further to encompass the local community.
2. Inform students that they will be learning about the officials that serve them in their community. To become more familiar with their names, they are going to complete a fun homework assignment. Present the *Government Officials Word search* to the students and describe how to complete one if it is new to them. **Optional:** Once students have completed the *Word Search* homework assignment, have the students try to match the officials with their jobs as a class.
3. Direct students to work in teams to find out about the various *Government officials*. Make sure that each team chooses a different official. Have students go to the *Government Officials Word Search* page and click on the officials to find out about their jobs. Instruct teams that they will be acting as reporters and it will be their job to not only find out information about their official but to also construct questions so that they can interview their official. They will then be responsible to report back to the rest of the class about their findings. Have student research teams complete the *Reporter's Notebook* worksheet.



4. Once student teams have completed their worksheet, instruct the students to write a letter to their official. You may want to brainstorm what should be included in the letter (e.g. date, introduction, purpose, interview questions, salutations, actual format of letter, etc.) Depending on the age of your students, you may want to have them compose or type their final draft on the computer. After the letters have been edited sufficiently, instruct students to either email or post their letters to their officials (addresses for both can be found in the *Government Officials Word Search* section by clicking on the official's name).
5. Once students receive a response from their Government Official, have them report back to the class. Discuss how the official's job impacts them in their community. Ask if they would want to do that job. Keep a class record of the responses and information presented by the student reporters about the government officials. **Optional:** Have students write thank you notes to the officials for doing the jobs that they do.

CA Language Arts Standards

Grades 3rd & 4th: Writing Strategies

Students write clear, coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing successive versions).

Grades 5th-8th: Writing Strategies Students write clear, coherent, and focused essays. The writing exhibits the students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

Grades 5th-8th: Listening and Speaking Strategies Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.



KIDS' CORNER



Reporter's Notebook

Great news! You've just been hired as a reporter for the newspaper to interview a county government official. What are five questions that you would ask? Write them down below and make your very own reporter's notebook.

Your First Name _____

County Government Official to Interview: _____

Information that I know about this official (Hint: you can research county government officials on the Government Officials Word Search page by clicking on their names):

Question 1 _____

Question 2 _____

Question 3 _____

Question 4 _____

Question 5 _____

