



Research Scavenger Hunt: Civil Servants

Lesson Overview:

Using resources provided in a Civics Learning Project Current Event, the teacher develops a scavenger hunt that requires students to respond to specific questions about the Current Event and locate and evaluate content efficiently and thoughtfully. The Research Scavenger Hunt can provide a broad, overarching introduction to a Current Event, challenging students not only to find basic information about the topic they're studying but also to answer a variety of higher-order questions, analyze and synthesize complementary and conflicting information, and utilize multiple sources in conversation with one another.

Duration of the Lesson:

One class period (~35 to 50 minutes)

Materials List:

- Computers or mobile devices for small group access to Current Events articles and videos
- Civics Learning Project Current Events website
- Research Scavenger Hunt Instruction Sheet

Oregon Social Sciences Academic Content Standards & Social Science Analysis Standards

Elementary School:

- 3.17 Use a variety of historical sources including artifacts, pictures and documents to identify factual evidence.
- 4.21 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details with relevant information and data.
- 5.26 Gather, assess, and use information from multiple primary and secondary sources (such as print, electronic, interviews, speeches, images) to examine an event, issue, or problem through inquiry and research.

Middle School:

- 7.27 Critique and analyze information for point of view, historical context, distortion, propaganda, and relevance including sources with conflicting information.
- 8.36 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

High School:

- HS.67 Evaluate historical sources for perspective, limitations, accuracy, and historical context.
- HS.68 Select and analyze historical information, including contradictory evidence, from a variety of primary and secondary sources to support or reject a claim.
- HS.73 Identify and analyze multiple and diverse perspectives as critical consumers of information.
- HS.74 Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon, critiquing and evaluating characteristics, influences, causes, and both short- and long-term effects.
- HS.78 Identify and critique how implicit bias, institutional racism, racial supremacy, privilege, intersectionality, and identity, influence perspectives in the understanding of history and contemporary events.

Other content- and grade-level relevant standards as applicable.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to... (SWBAT)

- locate basic factual information about a Current Event
- evaluate conflicting or contradictory sources of information
- connect, analyze, and synthesize data from multiple sources

Essential Question:

How can I apply different research strategies to locate and evaluate data from various sources?

Procedure:

Time	Activity
5-10 minutes	Current Events Introduction: the teacher provides a brief overview of the Current Event under investigation.
5 minutes	Directions: Teacher provides directions about the Scavenger Hunt by walking students through the Research Scavenger Hunt Worksheet Sheet. Answer student questions about the Worksheet and task. Divide students into groups (recommendation: aim for groups of no more than 3-5 students apiece; distribute students of different skill levels across various groups).
15-25 minutes	Group Work Time: Students work in groups to answer the questions in the Research Scavenger Hunt Instruction Sheet.
10-15 minutes	Report Out: Groups report on their results. The teacher leads the class through an evaluation of each response, seeking not only accurate information but complete and thorough responses.
5 minutes	Reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What research processes worked most effectively for your group? ● With what questions did your group struggle to find the answers? ● If you had it to do over again, what other approaches might you have used to find better/more accurate/more complete information?

Assessment(s):

- Each group submits written responses to the Scavenger Hunt.
- Students reflect on what kinds of research skills worked most effectively during the Scavenger Hunt.

Modifications/Variations:

- This activity provides for multiple entry points: the complexity of different questions (or sections within the Research Scavenger Hunt Instruction Sheet) can allow for differentiation by skill level, student literacy level, grade level, etc.
- Add student roles for searching (e.g., an activist researching this topic, a policymaker, reporter, perspective detective (whose job it is to find multiple perspectives). (This could be structured similarly to Literature Circles.)
- If a teacher wanted to cover a wide range of CE topics quickly, groups could work on different Current Events topics with the goal of reporting out on their CE topic to the rest of the class.

Lesson Recommendations:

- The quality of the Scavenger Hunt questions is key. Create some questions that will be relatively easy for students to identify, others that will challenge their investigatory skills, and others that will prove difficult to locate.
- This activity can be done at multiple times throughout a unit/course to introduce new types of research skills (e.g., analysis of historical primary sources, evaluation of charts/graphs/tables) or to practice basic research skills that students will apply in more complex ways to their own investigations or research endeavors.
- Avoid the impulse to turn the Scavenger Hunt into a race or a competition between groups; the activity should require students to work quickly and efficiently but not in a rushed, hurried, or sloppy manner.

Lesson Reflections:

What worked well in the lesson? Why?	
What would I modify for future implementation?	

Lesson Plan Adapted from:

Jenny Hehnke's classroom lesson

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Student Instructions:

Once you have divided into groups, please complete the following steps:

1. Designate a recorder for the group.
2. Briefly discuss a strategy for answering questions. Be sure to include all group members in your approach!
3. Answer the questions. Remember to include source citations.
4. If you finish early, review your answers and verify your responses.
5. Determine who will speak on behalf of the group.

Current Events Topic:

Civil Servants - Who are the bureaucrats we rely on?

Essential Questions:

- Who performs the functions of government?
- Why do you think it's important to have merit-based hiring for government officials?
- What are the inherent flaws in a bureaucracy?
- How could government be more responsive to the people it serves?
- Who are the civil servants whose work directly impacts your life?

Sources to Consult:

<https://civicslearning.org/resources/current-events-civil-servants/>

Scavenger Hunt:

Question	Answer	Name of Source(s)
1. Which of the federal departments are part of the President's Cabinet agencies?		
2. What are common complaints people have about bureaucracy?		
3. What animal is President Andrew Jackson riding in the famous political cartoon about the 'spoils system'?		

<p>4. If President-Elect Trump goes forward with his plan to eliminate the federal Department of Education, what responsibilities would disappear or be shifted to the states to handle?</p>		
<p>5. a. Which federal department handles SNAP benefits for hungry families? b. Which Oregon department handles this for the federal government?</p>	<p>a. b.</p>	
<p>6. Oregon relies on federal postal workers to deliver mail-in ballots. How well did that service go in the last election?</p>		
<p>7. The federal Secretary of State and the Oregon Secretary of State oversee very different departments. What are the main duties of each of these agencies?</p>		
<p>8. In Oregon's government, which state department handles child welfare issues?</p>		
<p>9. a. According to your County's website, how many departments are there? B. Who are your County Commissioners who have been elected to oversee those departments?</p>	<p>a. b.</p>	
<p>10. What important function of democracy does a County Clerk's office handle in Oregon?</p>		

Discuss in your group: *Who are the civil servants whose work directly impacts your life?*