

LESSON 4: Research Through Interviews**Overview:**

One of the most helpful ways for the students to devise an action plan is to talk to other “experts” who have experience in dealing with the issue your students are working on. This can be done by having students interview experts outside of class, having a guest speaker visit your class, or both. Rather than a step-by-step lesson plan, what follows are resources that could be used for either situation.

Student Objectives:

- Role-play interviewing different personality types
- Read about interviewing skills
- Prepare an interview plan
- Interview an expert on their issue

Materials:

- Interviewing: A Powerful Civic Skill handout
- Phone Form

Assessment:

- Interview Plan

Common Core State Standards**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**BELL-RINGER: Reflect on interviews (3 minutes)**

Ask students to reflect on an interview they have read, heard, or seen on TV that they thought was really effective. Ask them to write down a description of what exactly made it a good interview. Alternatively, you could bring in an example of an effective interview from a video or magazine and ask students to identify what makes it effective.

**BEFORE: Open-ended questions game (15 minutes)**

Solicit student responses from the bell-ringer. Explain to students that one of the most important skills of an interviewer is to be able to draw out information from his/her subject. This comes as a result of making the interviewee comfortable, and by the ability to ask open-ended questions. Demonstrate asking good questions by first asking a student a series of closed-ended and yes and no questions (e.g., Did you wake up early this morning? Did you eat breakfast? What did you eat for breakfast? Do you like rap music? What movie did you last see?). Then compare this by asking another student a series of open-ended questions (e.g., Would you describe yourself as a morning person? Why or why not? Describe your ideal morning. Describe the best breakfast. What types of music do you like and who are your favorite musical artists? What movies have you seen lately that you recommend?). Have the class compare the qualities of the two sets of answers. Explain that open-ended questions lead the subject to provide descriptive answers.

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Explain that you will play a quick game to practice the skill. One person must choose a character (can be historical, real, or fictional). People must ask only open-ended questions to find out about who this character is. So instead of asking "Do you have any siblings?" one could ask "Describe the members of your family and your relationship with them." The person being questioned will answer the questions honestly but should try not to give too much away too quickly. Anyone who asks a closed-ended question earns a strike. The goal is to guess the character correctly before earning three strikes.



DURING: Preparing for interviews (20 minutes)

Ask the class what information we could find out about our issue through interviews. Have the class generate a list of potential interviewees that might yield fruitful information. Have your students read Interviewing: A Powerful Civic Skill and Using the Telephone for Social Action handouts.



AFTER: Creating an interview plan (15 minutes)

Have students write down what people or types of people they would want to interview and why. Have them explain how they would go about setting up the interview and when they would be able to conduct the interview, and begin to create questions of what they would ask. We have provided a PHONE FORM should students choose to conduct phone interviews.



CLOSER: Share out (5 minutes)

Have a few students share who they hope to interview and what they hope to find out. Allow classmates to offer suggestions and feedback when appropriate. Hearing other individuals' plans might stimulate ideas for students who may be struggling to come up with ideas. Collect their plans so you can read them over and offer feedback.

NOTE: We highly recommend that you bring in an expert on the issue to your classroom so the entire class can practice interviewing an expert. This is also a good idea if it would be hard for each student to do individual interviews. If you bring in a speaker, you can have your students keep notes on the Guest Speaker Notes and Reflections form.

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DIGITAL TOOLS

Sometimes it can be challenging for your students to get issue experts to come to your school during a particular class period because they may have other commitments or live far away. Thanks to video conferencing tools, your students can interview these experts virtually. First, connect your computer to an LCD projector so the entire class can see the person being interviewed. Second, point your video camera at your entire class or point it at an “interview chair” and have your students take turns asking the issue expert questions. We recommend doing a trial run to test your camera placement and microphone sound before the interview.

Google hangouts – Your students can use Google hangouts to video chat with others if both parties have Gmail or Google+. If you have never used Google hangouts before, instructions on how to set it up can be found at <https://support.google.com/hangouts/answer/3115553?hl=en>.

Screencastify – <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/screencastify-screen-vide/mmeijimgabbpbgpdklnllpncmdofkcpn?hl=en>

Screencastify is a video screen capture software for Chrome. After you download the Chrome software, your students can use Screencastify to record all of the screen activity inside a tab, including audio, by just clicking “record.”

Skype – <http://skype.com> – Your students can use Skype to videoconference with others as long as both parties have Skype’s software on their computers and they are signed in to Skype. You can easily download the free version of Skype’s online videoconferencing software to any computer.

Recording Interviews

Interviews can be valuable sources of data for your students regardless of whether they are conducted in the classroom, on the street, or in someone’s office. You may want to encourage your students to videotape or audio-record their interviews so they can confirm something in their notes, see if they missed anything, or use the footage in a media campaign. Make sure they ask the people being interviewed for permission to videotape or audio-record their conversation. If your students plan to use the footage in a PSA, documentary, Twitter blast, or other media campaign, have them ask the interviewee to sign a media release form. Skype calls can be recorded for future use. Consider using this tool.

Audio – Most smart phones come equipped with audio recording software. Before the interview, have your students test how close the phone needs to be to the speaker to capture the dialogue clearly and check to see if there are any recording limits.

Video – You do not need fancy video equipment to get good footage. Most smart phones and tablets have adequate video recording capabilities. Before the interview, have the students test how close the video equipment needs to be to the participants to capture the dialogue clearly and check to see if there are any recording limits.

Photos – Photos can be very helpful later on if you want to create an Instagram, Twitter, and/or Facebook media campaign.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Interviewing: A Powerful Civic Skill

General Interviewing Tips

- Schedule an appointment ahead of time. Depending on who you are interviewing, this may be done by e-mail, a phone call, a letter, or face to face. You want to make sure the person has time to talk.
- Prepare at least four to five questions to ask. Remember to ask open-ended questions to avoid yes or no answers. You want to have a structure but don't get too tied to your prepared questions—allow room for the spontaneous questions and answers.
- Arrive on time with all of your supplies (questions, paper, pens).
- Be sure to write the name of the person (ask them to spell their name if necessary), title, contact information, and the date you met.
- Take good notes during the interview.
- If it is OK with the person you are interviewing, take his or her picture. Or better yet, have someone take a picture of the two of you together.
- Allow the interview to go off on a tangent but don't forget to bring it back to your original questions.
- Avoid cutting people off.
- Be polite.
- Remember, you are there to listen to them so focus on listening and let them do most of the talking.
- You can ask your interviewees where they got their information. That is a good way to check the accuracy of their statements.
- If interviewees are speaking too quickly, you can ask them to slow down.
- Always thank interviewees for his or her time and then send a follow-up thank you (e-mail, letter, card).

Phone Interviews

Appointment Setting

If you are trying to set an appointment with someone, make sure to have a list of at least three or four possible times you can meet. If you are trying to set up an appointment with elected officials, you will probably need to explain what you want to their schedulers and then wait for them to get back to you.

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Preparing for Your Call:

- If you will be using a phone at school, make sure you have permission.
- If you are trying to speak to someone specific, try to make sure you know the proper pronunciation of their name and the gender of the person you are trying to call.
- Find a quiet place to make the call where you won't be interrupted.
- Make sure you have enough time to talk (don't call five minutes before your math test).
- Fill out questions 1–2 of the Phone Form before calling.

During the Call:

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Introduce yourself and where you are from. Get the name of the person to whom you are talking (write it down).
- Briefly explain what information you are looking for and ask if the person you are talking to can help you. If they can't, ask for the name and contact person of someone who can. Use the name when you make your next call. For example, "Hi. John Smith from the Mikva Challenge gave me your name and said you might be able to help me."
- If the person you want to talk to cannot talk, find out when a better time would be to call them back. Write down what time he or she suggests.
- Be polite.
- Write down any answers you get. Feel free to ask people to repeat themselves or clarify any answers you don't understand.
- Make sure you have the correct name, title, and contact information of the person you spoke to, in case you need to get back in touch.

After the Call:

- Follow up. If you told the person you were going to do something, do it.
- Write a thank you note if you felt like the person you spoke to really went out of the way to help you (for example, talked to you for a long time, mailed you a packet of information, etc.).

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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Student Handout: Phone Form

Fill in questions #1–2 before the interview.

1. Introduce yourself.

Your name:

Contact information where they can reach you (in case they ask):

Phone:

Address:

Explain why you are calling. If you are trying to set an appointment, write the possible times here.

2. What you want to know:

Can the person you are talking to help you?

If not, who else can help you?

Name:

Phone number:

3. Information (write down what your contact tells you)

4. Any follow-up?

Additional notes on back of form.

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Research the Issue

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Student Handout: Guest Speaker Notes and Reflections

Information from speaker	Thoughts, ideas, questions
Next steps	