

## Activity Notes for Teachers

### Elementary School, Grade 4

#### I. Getting Started:

**Day 1.** Start by introducing the concept of local government to the class. Kansas has more than 4000 different units of local government, from very small to very large. Prepare a **chart or poster** showing the various units of government within your county. Show a map of Kansas Counties so students can see where they fit in the state, county, city.

As the unit progresses, ask students to collect photos from the newspaper showing various local officials who represent the city, county, school district and any others you can find, ie. rural water districts, watershed districts, tribal councils, townships, etc. Bring them on Day 2.

**Day 2.** Develop a list of elected officials that students suggested or know in your community. Cover these points:

- What does a county commissioner do?
- What does a city council member do? A Mayor?
- How are they different or alike?
- Do you know any city council members or county commissioners?
- Does anyone in your family hold an elected office?
- What office is it?
- Who are the school board members with oversight of this school? Do you know any of them? What do they do and how is it alike or different from city or county officers?

**DAY 3.** Read the transcript on the KOHP website of Jim Leiker's explanation of [why oral history is important](#). Reframe it in 4<sup>th</sup> grade terms and discuss with students. Have the student listen to the six-minute video during BellWork.

#### II. Who Should be Interviewed?

##### Day 4.

Help the class construct a list of possible interviewees. Use the compelling questions to narrow the list to three or four people.

##### Day 5.

Divide the class into teams of 3 to complete the research on each possible interviewee. (see protocol)

Select the interviewees and contact them to establish a time and place for the interview that meets the guidelines in the protocol. Each team reviews the protocol and discusses its importance. Review videos in BellWork, particularly Kimberly Houston, [How to Conduct an oral history interview](#).

### III. HOW DOES THE TEAM CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW?

#### WEEK 2

- A. Each 3-person team should research their interview subject to gain background for the interview.
- B. Then when research is finished, develop the questions to ask their assigned government official.
- C. All teams should study “[How to conduct an oral history interview](#)” (K. Houston). [Bing Videos is another](#). There are several other “how to’s “ on YouTube.
- D. Arrange practice sessions where students interview each other. Use the video camera each session so each team can review their mock interviews and get feedback from their team members.
- E. Select one from each team to act as interviewer, one to run the video camera, one to take notes.

### IV. Interview Content

- A. **Introduction** of school project and Interviewee (see protocol.)
- B. Get Acquainted by asking the interviewee about their personal history—where they grew up and where they went to school, their family, their occupation, etc.
- C. **Background of Interviewee**; Why did you run for office? Why this office? What did you hope to accomplish? Why was that important? To Whom?
- D. What does your local unit of government do? What did you hope to **accomplish while in office**? Were you able to accomplish them?
- E. **Career Path** after leaving office. What impact did your service have on your community? On you?

### V. Additional Information

- A. **Recordings and Transcripts** of your Interview may be submitted to the Kansas Oral History Project for posting on their website. KOHP will determine if the interview recording is of sufficient quality or interest to add to its collection of local government officials. Use the contact form on at <https://ksoralhistory.org/contact>.
- B. **An interview of 15-30 minutes is appropriate for this grade level.**

## Activity Notes for Teachers

### Middle School, Grade 7

#### I. Who Should be Interviewed?

A. Obtain a video tape of segments of school board meetings or city council or county commission meetings to play for class. [TV station news footage or newspaper stories will also work.

- What does a county commissioner do?
- What is the difference in roles and responsibilities between a city council member and a county commissioner? How is the form of government different?
- Invite a local elected official to speak to the class about their unit of government.
- Do you know someone that is a county commissioner or city council member?
- Does anyone in your family hold an elected office?
- What office is it?
  
- Who are the school board members with oversight of this school?
- Do you know any of them? What do they do?

B. Form three- person teams to identify a list of possible interviewees.

C. Use the compelling questions to narrow the field and begin research.

D. Select the interviewees and contact them to establish a time and place for the interview that meets guidelines in the protocol.

#### II. Who should be the interviewer?

A. Each three-person research team investigates their list of interview subjects to gain background for the interview. Next, they should develop the questions to ask their assigned local government official.

B. Arrange practice sessions where students interview each other. Use the video camera at the practice sessions so each team can review their mock interviews and get feedback from their team members.

C. Select one from each team to act as interviewer, one to run the video camera, one to take notes.

#### III. HOW DOES THE TEAM CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW?

A. Each three-person team should develop the questions to ask their assigned local government official.

B. All teams should study "[How to conduct an oral history interview](#)" (K. Houston). [Bing Videos is another](#). There are several other "how to's " on YouTube.

## IV. Interview Content

- A. **Introduction** of school project and Interviewee (see protocol.)
- B. Get acquainted by asking the interviewee about their personal history—where they grew up and where they went to school, their family, their occupation, etc.
- C. **Background of Interviewee**; Why did you run for office? Why this office? What did you hope to accomplish? Why was that important? To Whom?
- D. What does your local unit of government do? What did you hope to **accomplish while in office**? Were you able to accomplish them?
- E. Career Path after leaving office. What impact did your service have on your community? On you?

## V. Additional Information

- A. **An interview of 30-45 minutes is appropriate for this grade level.**
- B. **Recordings and Transcripts** of your interview may be submitted to the Kansas Oral History project for posting on their website. KOHP will determine if the recording is of sufficient quality or interest to add to its collection of local government officials.  
Use the contact form on at <https://ksoralhistory.org/contact>
- C. **Interview Content** will follow the same format as outlined in the protocol, but with more emphasis on policy and probing follow up questions by the interviewer. See the High School section.

## **Activity Notes for Teachers**

### **High School grades 10,11, or 12**

#### **I. Who Should be Interviewed:**

- A. Start by forming research and interview teams with three students on each. Each team is assigned a unit of government to research and interview from the following list: City council, county commission, school board, township, rural water district, drainage district, sewer district, library board, hospital board, tribal council.
  
- B. Teams obtain maps of their respective district showing boundaries, lists of incumbents and charter for that unit of government. Look for overlap in boundaries, jurisdictions and charters.
  
- C. Students should attend at least one meeting of the local government they are studying and present their impressions of that body in a class discussion.
  
- D. Each team should select one present or former elected official to interview. (KOHP generally prefers to select former elected officials because someone in office currently may not be free to be perfectly candid.)
  
- E. The team researches that individual's record of service in office, including dates of service, committee assignments, other boards and commissions and honors and awards.
  
- F. Contact the individual and arrange an interview time and place that meets the guidelines in the protocol.

#### **II. Who Should be the Interviewer?**

- A. Each three-person research team should develop the questions to ask their assigned local government official.
  
- B. Study the videos. The protocol and other resources on how to conduct an oral history interview. Here are two resources: [How to conduct an Oral History Interview](#) and [The Jotform Blog](#) by Kimberly Houston.
  
- C. Arrange practice sessions where students interview each other. Use the video camera at the practice sessions so each team can review their mock interviews and get feedback from their team members.
  
- D. After practice sessions are finished, select one from each team to act as interviewer, one to run the video camera and one to take notes during the interview and write up/transcribe the interview.

### III. Other Information

**A. Recordings and Transcripts** of your interview may be submitted to the Kansas Oral History Project for posting on their website. KOHP will determine if the interview recording is of sufficient quality or interest to add to its collection of local government officials.

Use the contact form on the [KOHP website](#).

**B. An interview of 45-75 minutes is appropriate for this grade level.**

### IV. Interview Content

**A. Introduction** of school project and interviewee –see protocol.

**B Background** of Interviewee:

1. Get acquainted by asking the interviewee about their **personal history** –where they grew up and where they went to school. Ask about their family, their occupation, etc.
2. Why did you run for this office? What did you hope to accomplish? Why was that important? To Whom?

**C. What does your local unit of government do?** What is its function? Give examples. What are the significant issues you faced as an elected official?

**D. What were your accomplishments while in office?**

1. What were your goals? Were you able to accomplish them?
2. What policies were you able to implement and with what effect on your community?
3. What did you learn about how government functions that surprised you?

**E. Career Path after leaving office.**

1. What impact did your service have on your community? Your life?
2. What plans do you have for the future?
3. What advice do you have for others seeking public office or public service?
4. Does Kansas have too many local units of government? Should they be consolidated?