

Intended for Grades: 7 -12 **Est. Time:** Project Specific
(Adaptable for lower grades)

Lesson Title: COLLECTING COMMUNITY HISTORIES

Lesson Purpose: Students will:

- * Increase understanding of their community through research and interviewing
- * Apply language arts skills including critical thinking, questioning, listening, speaking, and writing
- * Work in collaboration to document and perpetuate community wisdom and history

Materials & Preparation:

- * Notepad, pen
- * Video and/or digital cameras (optional)
- * Computers for editing video and text (optional)
- * Interview Guide

Background Information:

An abundant source of knowledge about a community can be found from individuals with deep roots in the area. In days past when extended ‘ohana (family) lived in an ahupua’a (land division) together, these stories were naturally passed on by kūpuna (grandparents) who cared for their mo’opuna (grandchildren). In today’s world, extended families living together may not be reality for many kids. Helping youth learn from elders by organizing interviews and “talk story” time can provide powerful experiences that teach about history and life.

The following excerpt from the *Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide* (page 8) describes the power and purpose of documenting community histories shared by elders with deep knowledge:

“In every community - in families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools - there are people who have knowledge and skills to share - ways of knowing and doing that often come from years of experience and have been preserved and passed down across generations. As active participants in community life, these bearers of tradition are primary sources of culture and history. They are unparalleled in the vividness and authenticity they can bring to the study of local history and culture.”

“These stories, memories, and traditions are powerful expressions of community life and values. They anchor us in a larger whole, connecting us to the past, grounding us firmly to the present, giving us a sense of identity and roots, belonging and purpose.”

Steps:

1. Identify purpose you want to focus on and skills/content you want to address:

- * Select a focus for these interviews. Balance student interest with information you feel is relevant for your students to learn; identify goals across content areas.
- * Decide what students can create with information they gather.
(I.e.: Booklet, poster, PowerPoint, or video for interviewee and school library)

2. Deepen understanding of why we conduct interviews:

- * Brainstorm why these interviews might benefit students and community.
- * Discuss the concept “Bearers of Tradition”, including who may hold that position, why their stories are important to know, and how this relates to themselves and their community.

3. Help students understand steps and skills of interviewing. Options include:

- * Read and discuss interview guide (see below).
- * Model process in class with a volunteer interviewee; then discuss what went well and what could be improved.
- * Go to PBS “Long Story Short” Archive to watch, listen to, or read a posted interview as a model: http://www.pbshawaii.org/ourproductions/longstory_guests.htm

4. Set up project guidelines and supports:

- * Brainstorm a list of who might be primary sources in the community.
- * Set up a timeline and schedule class work time to help students meet deadlines.

5. Conclude the project with reflection, presentations, and celebration:

- * Facilitate sharing of finished products with interviewees, the class, and community.
- * Celebrate what was learned.
- * Reflect on what was learned and appreciated, for both process and content (See below). Also consider possible improvements to this project.

Reflection Questions:

- * What did you like about this project? Think about the preparation, the interview, and the follow-up work with the information received.
- * What challenges did you face?
- * What information did you learn that was valuable to you?
- * How would you make this project even better?

Resources:

- * Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide:
http://www.folklife.si.edu/education_exhibits/resources/guide/introduction.aspx

* *Example of a digital recorder:* iGearPro 8GB Digital Audio Voice Recorder - Multifunctional Portable Rechargeable Dictaphone MP3 Player (found on Amazon.com)

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date _____

COLLECTING COMMUNITY HISTORIES INTERVIEW GUIDE

Before the Interview:

1. Discover what you want to learn:

Decide on a focused area of interest: _____

Brainstorm possible interviewees: _____

2. Find someone who knows desired information and is willing to share:

- * Ask permission to record their *mana'o* (knowledge).
- * Share purpose and briefly explain what you want to learn.
- * Offer to give them your questions beforehand.

Set day, time, & place to do the interview: _____

3. Develop your questions:

- * Brainstorm potential questions; review and revise. (Attach questions to this guide.)
- * Consider some type of order (chronological, by topic, by priority, etc.)
- * Ask open-ended questions to acquire specifics on something of interest.

Open-ended questions can have a variety of possible answers. Closed questions are more specific.
Open-ended (fat) question: “*What were your favorite things to do when you were my age?*”
Closed (skinny) question: “*Do you like to swim?*”

- * Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”.
- * Consider asking “what, when, why, who, and how” questions.
- * Ask someone to review your questions first to make sure they are appropriate.

4. Decide how to record your interview; then prepare what you need:

TO DO:

- * Write key word notes during the interview: Bring extra paper/pens.
- * Write additional notes after the interview: Do it soon so you remember details.

YOU CAN:

- * Audio-record the interview: *Ask permission first. Test equipment and find a quiet location; you need Audio Recorder; power source if not battery; tapes if needed*
- OR -
- * Videotape the interview: (Again, ask first) *Practice with equipment and check lighting/audio before; need video camera, microphones, computer and program,*

During the Interview:

- * Make sure your interviewee is comfortable. Provide shade, water, and a nice seat.
- * Honor the interviewee by demonstrating active listening* techniques.

(Experienced interviewers listen more than they talk.)

***Active Listening**

- * Maintain eye contact
- * Paraphrase** what was said
- * Remain silent until speaker finishes talking
- * Listen with focused intent

***Paraphrase: short retelling; restating main idea; a way to keep person talking.*

After the Interview:

- * Review your notes as soon as possible and add details from what you remember.
- * If you record the interview, watch your video or listen to your audio as soon as possible so you can write down more details.
- * Decide on the information you will use and how you will share what you were told. Do any additional research if needed.
- * Spend time making a quality product that will preserve and share what you learned. Your interview information can be created into a:
-Poster -Booklet -Video -PowerPoint -Poem -Play ... or any other creative way to pass on the knowledge that was gained.
- * Send a thank you note to the person you interviewed, sharing your appreciation and something you learned. Consider giving this person what was created.
- * Spend time reflecting on what was learned and if you would like to continue gathering community information in this way.

My reflection: What I liked; challenges; information learned; ways to improve