Where Are They Safe? Understanding Presidential Succession

Students will learn about the presidential succession and about regions around the USA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Geography Standards</th>
<th>Arizona Geography Strand</th>
<th>Other Arizona Standards</th>
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| **ELEMENT TWO: PLACES AND REGIONS**  
4. The physical and human characteristics of places  
5. That people create regions to interpret Earth’s complexity.  
**ELEMENT SIX: THE USES OF GEOGRAPHY**  
18. How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future. | **Concept 5: Environment and Society**  
PO 6. Explain how societies and governments plan for and respond to natural disasters (e.g., evacuation routes, changing farming techniques, warning systems).  
**Concept 6: Geographic Applications**  
PO 3 Use geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., recognizing patterns, mapping, graphing) when discussing current events. | **Strand 3 Civics/Government**  
**Concept 2 Structure of Government**  
PO 5. Describe the line of succession to the presidency and the presidency as stated in the 25th Amendment.  
**Writing Standards for 6-8 for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**  
**Text Types and Purposes**  
6-8.WHST.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.  
a. Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.  
b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.  
c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.  
d. Establish and maintain a formal style.  
e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented |

**Overview**

Many organizations in our world have a distinctive chain of command. This chain of command is needed to keep things running in all sorts of planned and unplanned situations. One of things that students should understand is that there is a formal plan in place should we ever need to replace the President.

**Purpose**

In this lesson students will learn about two large and very different concepts. First they will learn and apply the chain of leadership for Presidential Succession. While using this very important list, they will also be learning and investigating different regions across the U.S. By learning about these different regions and their geographic features, students will be able to understand why certain members of our government are never in the same location at once.
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Materials

- Who do you think should be in line for Presidential Succession? Worksheet and Answer Keys
- Regional National Disasters Cards
- Region Cards
- US Physical Regions map
- US Regions map (unlabeled)
- US Regions Teacher map (labeled and in color) (Large copy (either projected on screen or printed using the new feature in acrobat reader where you can print it as a poster) or you can simply use a large USA map.)
- Crayons (5 different highlighter colors would work the best)
- Tape/pushpins
- Scissors (unless you use a paper cutter beforehand)

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. list and describe the chain of leadership in Presidential Succession.
2. apply the Presidential Succession plan.
3. identify the 5 main regions across the U.S.
4. explain geographic features in these 5 different regions.

Procedures

SESSION ONE

1. Begin the lesson by asking the students if they know who is next in line for the presidency if something were to happen to the current president. Lead them in a discussion
   - Why they think it is important to have a back-up?
   - How this related to the chain of command in your school, in a company, or even in their family?
2. Pass out Who do you think should be in line for Presidential Succession? Worksheet to each student. Give them about 10-15 minutes to fill out the first page. This page asks them to create their own presidential succession list.
3. Once all students are done, have them compare their list with their neighbors, but don’t allow them to make changes.
4. With the help of the second page, teach the correct order of the presidential succession. Name the current people in office and if you have internet access and a projector, show pictures and job descriptions to help the students better understand the offices.
5. Collect their worksheets as the assessment for the day.

SESSION TWO

6. Start this session by asking students if they know what region we live in. This should lead to a discussion about regions:
   - What is a region?
   - What are the regions of the U.S?
   - How are the regions different from each other in terms of climate, land, and resources?
7. Pass out the unlabeled U.S. Regions Map: to each student. Have them mark on the map all the locations they have lived or visited.
8. Discuss what national disasters/elements have the students experienced while in these different locations. You can assign symbols to these disasters and have them mark their map to indicate strong occurrences of these natural phenomena. (I.E. Blizzard = ***, etc.)
9. This step can either be done now, or at the start of Session Three.
   - Have the class complete the disaster cards (or you complete them as the class guides you). The students can create their own type of disasters too (i.e. flash floods, nuclear plant explosions, zombies?, etc).
   - Save these cards for the activity during Session three.
10. As a class, have the students create a legend on their map with different color highlighters by referring to US Regions Teacher map. Then have the students identify the 5 different regions in the USA by coloring these regions on their map. They can either work in pairs or individually. This can also lead into quick explanations of the different regions boundaries, and why different states are included in a certain regions and not another.
11. While students are coloring their regions, walk around the room asking each student (group) to explain one or two differences between the 5 main regions. Or you can collect their maps for full grading.

SESSION THREE

12. At the start of class take about 5 minutes for each topic (U.S. regions and succession) and review what the students have learned the last
two days. Pass back their graded. Who do you think should be in line for Presidential
Succession? Worksheet to use in class. Also
ask them to get out their maps from SESSION
TWO if you have not collected them as an
assessment.
13. If you did not complete the Regional National
Disaster Cards in session two, please do so
now.
14. Divide the students into pairs.
15. Pass out Region Cards and give the students
time to cut the pages into 5 cards or pass
them out pre-cut.
16. Students will now be given time to take their
presidential succession list from session one
and safely divide the members throughout the
USA. Explain that they need to make sure that
their government can still run even if certain
members were not available. (Encourage them
to place all of their people in one location)
17. Also have the students identify what could
happen in the 5 different regions.
18. Once the students have finished steps 16-17,
have them tape/tack their cards to the
different regions on the large classroom USA
map. Tell them their decisions are final and
cards cannot be moved once they have
placed them.

OR
Instead of having the students place the cards
on a large classroom map; students can write
out their choices in the different regions on
smaller individual maps like a bingo card.
19. Discuss with the students the practices already
in place to make sure that certain members
are not in the same location at once.
(President and Vice President never fly on the
same plane, etc.)
20. As a class, have one volunteer draw a
Regional National Disaster Card from a jar or
hat. (These cards were created in step 8 or
12) This indicates what happens at a given
time. If the event is severe enough remove the
cards from that region. Or have the students
cross off regions on their small map as the
disaster cards are called.
21. Ask students who lost their president who is in
charge next. Was there a group that put the
president and vice president in the same
place? Who is in charge of their country now?
22. Choose another card, and repeat the steps
from number 20-21, are students’ groups’
governments still working? Who is running their
countries?
23. Continue this class process until you feel the
students have experienced/figured out the
importance of the presidential succession, and
the involvement of regions in the USA.
24. As an assessment collect the region cards and
grade the second half for correct association
of events to a region.
25. Assess students by giving and collecting the
Presidential Succession Assessment

Assessment

Have students list the first 5 leaders in the chain of
succession if the President is not able to serve.
Mastery will be considered 80% or higher on this
quiz.

The Region Cards and map can be graded for
accuracy. Mastery will be considered 80% or
higher.

As homework, the students will write an argument
for one region of the country being safer than the
others. They should use their knowledge of
physical features to support their choice. Mastery
will be a score of 4 or higher on the 6 Traits Writing
Rubric in the areas of Ideas and Organization.

Extensions

Watch video clips about the presidential
succession. www.discovereducation.com

Discuss or show when the presidential succession
list was actually used and why. Last three pages
of http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/11186
7.pdf

Have the students
• develop succession lists for other
organizations
• create regions maps for their school or
neighborhood
• Give them a second chance at keeping
their whole list safe.

Sources

Wikipedia list with links to each office and current
officers http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_preside
tial_line_of_succession

PDF document from the US Government
summarizing the Presidential Succession Act of
1947, last 3 pages has list of when the list was
actually used and why.
http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/11186
7.pdf

Government kids site to help explain government
topics.
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