Taking Care of U.S. Veterans: Responsibilities of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Lesson Summary

Grade, Subject: 4th-8th Grade, Social Studies

Lesson Overview: Students will explore the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs within the context of the United States government.

Florida State Social Studies Standards:

SS.4.FL.1.8 Income earned from working and most other sources of income are taxed. Describe ways that the revenue from these taxes is used to pay for government provided goods and services.

SS.5.C.3.1 Describe the organizational structure (legislative, executive, judicial branches) and powers of the federal government as defined in Articles I, II, and III of the U.S. Constitution.

SS.5.C.3.3 Give examples of powers granted to the federal government and those reserved for the states.

SS.7.C.3.3 Illustrate the structure and function (three branches of government established in Articles I, II, and III with corresponding powers) of government in the United States as established in the Constitution.

Florida State English Language Arts Standards:

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Cluster 1 – Key Ideas and Details: LAFS.4.RI.1.2, LAFS.5.RI.1.2, LAFS.6.RI.1.2, LAFS.7.RI.1.2 and LAFS.8.RI.1.2.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will identify the following general powers described in the U.S. Constitution as federal legislative powers: *raise an army and navy, declare war, appropriate funds*.
- Students will identify the following general powers described in the U.S. Constitution as federal executive powers: *commander in chief, allocate the budget.*
- Students will recognize the placement of the Department of Veterans Affairs within the structure of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
- Students will analyze the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs as part of the federal executive branch.
- Students will identify goods and services provided to veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs using revenue from taxes.

Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Essential Questions

- Which part of the United States government is responsible for taking care of US veterans?
- What are goods and services that United States government provides to US veterans?

Lesson Outline and Materials

Part I – The United States Government – *Builds Background*

- Student page 1, reading section **Let's Get Started** and **The United States Government**
- Student page 2, worksheet **The United States Government**

Part II - United States Veterans – *Builds Background*

- Student page 1, reading section **The United States Veterans**
- Student page 2, worksheet **The United States Government**
- **US Armed Forces Anthem - "Armed Forces Medley"** (3:29) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhqmBt1m0Vk

Part III – The Department of Veterans Affairs – *New Content*

- **Cartoon Rap Lyrics for FEDs (Fifteen Executive Departments)** (4:43) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWpc2m_QHzE.
- Student page 3, reading sections **The Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration**, **Veterans Benefits Administration**, and **National Cemetery Administration**
- Student page 4, worksheet **The Department of Veterans Affairs**

Part IV – The VHA, VBA and NCA – *New Content*

- Student page 5, reading section **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**
- Student page 6, reading section **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**
- Student page 7, reading section **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)**
- **Taps** (1:00) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fmPWa7gL8k
- **American flag etiquette with the Marines** (1:37) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVYYdOQ8RvM.
- Student page 8, worksheet **The 3 Veterans Administrations: VHA, VBA and NCA**

Part V – Student Application and Review - *Activity*

- Student page 8, worksheet **The 3 Veterans Administrations: VHA, VBA and NCA**
- Brown Bags with items/images prepared for Part V activity
- Student page 9, worksheet **The 3 Veterans Administrations: Project** directions and rubric

Lesson Plans

Part I - The United States Government:

- Hook
  - Write the question *What does the government do?* on the board. Give students 2-4 minutes to brainstorm ideas of what government does in pairs, tables, or small groups.
  - After their time is up, write a list of their ideas on the board under the question.
- Introduction
  - Say: *In this lesson, we're going to learn about some specific jobs that the government does to help a specific group of people we call veterans. We're going to tackle this lesson in a few steps. Our first step is to figure out the big picture of how the United States government is set up and figure out specific examples of what the government does. As we do that, we'll revisit this list and compare our answers with what we learn. Then we'll get into the details of learning who veterans are, which part of the government works to help veterans, and how they do that.*
- Reading section ***The United States Government*** (page 1)
  - First Read
    - Set purpose for reading. Say: *Put your pens and pencils down for a minute. While I read this section out loud, you need to follow along in the text with your finger and eyes and look for examples of powers or jobs the government does. When I'm done reading, I'll give you a few minutes to reread the section to yourself and underline as many powers or jobs that you can find.*
    - Read the section to them and give them 2-3 minutes to reread the section to themselves and underline.
    - After they've worked individually, tell the class there are 8 examples in the reading and have them work together for 2-3 more minutes in pairs or groups to find the 8 examples.
      Call on students to share their examples with the class. As they share, update the brainstorming list in a second color. Circle any ideas from their brainstorming that were also in the reading (or that are close to the ideas in the reading, ex: if students guessed d*efend the USA*, then tie that example to all the armed services examples from the reading) and write the new examples from the reading on the board.
    - The eight examples are: 1) *make laws,* 2) *enforce the laws,* 3) *interpret the law,* 4) *raise and support armies,* 5) *provide and maintain a navy,* 6) *declare war,* 7) *control how much money is spent on armed services projects, and* 8) *act as Commander-In-Chief.*

- Second Read
  - Set purpose for reading. Say: *This section not only tells us jobs that the government does but it also tells us which part of the government is responsible for each of those jobs. This time as your read (in small groups or pairs), look for the part in the text that tells you how the government is set up and what the names of its different parts are called. Circle the names of the different parts when you're done reading.*
  - Give students 2-3 minutes to complete this task.
  - While students read, draw a tree with three branches on the board. When their time is up, call on students to tell you the different parts of the government. Label the three branches on the tree as they tell you.
- Third Read
  - Set purpose for reading. Say: *Let's use this section to help us understand one more piece of information. This reading also tells us a little bit about what each branch is responsible for doing. This time as I read out loud I want you to say "Stop!" any time I read an example of a government power or job. Be ready to tell me which branch does that job when you stop me.*
  - Read the passage out loud and write the jobs, or powers, under the corresponding branch as directed by students.

    Legislative: *make laws, raise and support armies, provide and maintain a navy, declare war, control how much money is spent on military projects*
    Executive: *enforce the laws, act as Commander-In-Chief*
    Judicial: *interpret the law*

- Apply New Knowledge and Summarize
  - Have students use the reading section to fill in the blanks on the tree map on the worksheet **The United States Government** (page 2) and answer comprehension and inference questions.
  - Questions are:

    1. *According to the reading, what are the **main** powers of the three branches of government?*
    2. *According to the reading, what does the government do for the armed services?*
    3. *Inference: What do you guess the government does for people who used to be in the armed services?*

Part II - United States Veterans:

- Hook
  - Draw a tree map with five branches on the board. The heading is *Armed Services* and the five sections are *Army*, *Navy*, *Marines*, *Air Force,* and *Coast Guard*.
  - Say: *Before we read the next short section, let's talk a little bit about the parts of the armed services. There are five main branches of the armed services of the United States – the army, the navy, the marines, the air force and the coast guard. Tell your partner (or group) if you personally know anyone who was or is in the armed services.*
  - When students are done sharing in small groups, ask for a few students to share their examples with the class and, if applicable, share your own personal connections to any service members past or present.
  - Say: *We're going to take a minute to honor our friends and family members who served or who are serving in the armed services by listening to a medley of the official anthems of the different services. Medleys like this one are often played on national holidays, during parades, professional orchestra or symphony performances, or even sometimes at sporting events. It's a tradition for someone who was or is in the armed services to stand when their service's anthem is played. Today you get to stand to honor your friends and family members.*
  - Watch **US Armed Forces Anthem - "Armed Forces Medley"** (3:29) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhqmBt1m0Vk and prompt students to stand and sit according to their personal connections' service.
- Reading section ***United States Veterans*** (page 1)
  - After the video, read the section **United States Veterans**.
- Apply New Knowledge
  - After reading, ask students to reread and update their answer to the final question on the worksheet **The United States Government** (page 2), *Make an inference: What do you guess the government does for people who used to be in the armed services?*

Part III – The Department of Veterans Affairs:

- Hook
  - Say: *We're going to watch a rap video to introduce us to the next step of this lesson. The video is going to explain what 15 parts of the executive branch are called and what they do. You goal is to remember at least 5 of them at the end of the video.*
  - Watch **Cartoon Rap Lyrics for FEDs (Fifteen Executive Departments)** (4:43) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWpc2m_QHzE.
  - After the video, give students 1-2 minutes to see how many departments they can list/explain in pairs or in groups.

- Ask students to report out to the class the departments they remember. Depending on how fast you'd like this part of the lesson to go, keep track of how many they remembered by counting on your own fingers or by writing what they remember on the board.

- Reading section ***The Department of Veterans Affairs*** (page 3)
  - Have students review the tree map on the worksheet **The Department of Veterans Affairs** (page 4) prior to reading this section.
  - Say: *After we read our next section, you'll be able to fill in half of the blanks in this tree map. Study the tree map for a minute so you have an idea of the information you'll be listening for as we read.*
  - After a minute, read section ***The Department of Veterans Affairs*.**
  - Give students 1-2 minutes to fill in the blanks on the tree map. The blanks are: *Executive*, *Transportation*, *Education* and *Veterans Affairs*.
- Reading sections ***Veterans Health Administration***, ***Veterans Benefits Administration***, and ***National Cemetery Administration*** (page 3)
  - First Read
    - Set purpose for reading: Say: *While I read the rest of the sections on page 3, I'd like you to follow along on your on page and look and listen for words that you're not sure how to say.*
    - Read the rest of page 3 to students.
    - Have students repeat some of the more difficult words: ex. *administration, compensation, guaranteeing,* and *medallion*. Ask students about any words they want to practice and practice as a class.
  - Second Read
    - Set purpose for reading. Say: *You're going to read page 3 again in pairs (or groups). This time while you read you need to search for examples of what the <u>government</u> does to take care of veterans. Reread the whole page out loud to each other. Stop after each paragraph and underline examples of how the <u>government</u> helps veterans in each paragraph. Switch readers after each paragraph.*
    - Give students 6-8 minutes to complete their reading and underlining.
    - Have pairs share in larger groups, then as a class. Or have groups share some of their ideas/examples with the class.
- Apply New Knowledge and Summarize
  - Have students complete the rest of the blanks in the tree map and answer the questions on the worksheet **The Department of Veterans Affairs** (page 4). The blanks are: *Health*, *Benefits*, and *Cemetery*.
  - Questions are:

    1. *What are three examples of what the VA does?*
    2. *Make an inference. The VA and the Department of Defense (DOD) are different executive departments. What do you think are the differences between the two departments?*

3. *Make an inference. Why do you think the US created the VA and the DOD as two different departments?*
   - Review/share individual or group responses to the questions with the whole class.

Part IV – VHA, VBA, and NCA:

- Reading **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)** (page 5)
  - Make sure students have **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)** reading page (page 5) and the worksheet **The 3 Veterans Administrations: VHA, VBA and NCA** (page 8).
  - First Read
    - Set a purpose for reading. Say: *For our first read through of this page, I'm going to read it aloud to the class. While I read you need to follow along on your own paper and be thinking about the main idea of this page. The topic of this reading is the Veterans Health Administration. So, every sentence will be about the VHA. I need you think about what the reading is saying about the VHA.*
    - Read the page to students. Stop to make students practice pronouncing difficult words with you.
    - When finished reading, give students 1-2 minutes to talk about the main idea of the reading in pairs (or groups).
    - Discuss their ideas as a class and help students identify the main idea of the passage. The main idea of the passage is: *The VHA is a large, important organization that works to meet the health and medical needs of veterans in many ways.*
    - Have students fill out the **Main Idea** section in the **VHA column** of their notes on the worksheet **The 3 Veterans Administrations: VHA, VBA and NCA** (page 8).
  - Second Read
    - Set a purpose for reading. Say: *Now you get to read the VHA page in pairs (or groups). Read one paragraph at a time and then decide which lines in the paragraph are specific details or examples of the main idea. Underline the details in the reading and then write them in the **Details/Examples** section in the **VHA column** of your notes page. Do not write sentences in your notes. Figure out how to write short bullet points in your notes, maybe two to four words for each detail.*
    - Give students 7-10 minutes to complete the reading, underlining and notes in pairs or groups.

- Reading **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)** (page 6)
  - Scaffold this section as needed.
    - If students need more support, repeat same process for identifying the main idea and details for this section of reading as detailed above.
    - If students are ready to work independently, have students identify the main idea and the details on their own.

- When they've finished the section, check for understanding and correct responses about the main idea and the details.
  - The main idea of the passage is: *The Veterans Benefits Administration helps to organize and deliver many kinds of financial benefits to service members, veterans and their families.*

- Reading **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)** (page 7)
  - Scaffold this section as needed.
    - If students need more support, repeat same process for identifying the main idea and details for this section of reading as detailed above.
    - If students are ready to work independently, have students identify the main idea and the details on their own.
  - When they've finished the section, check for understanding and correct responses about the main idea.
    - The main idea of the passage is: *The National Cemetery Administration works to help and honor veterans when they've died.*
  - When students share their details about the NCA, check for understanding and correct responses. Listen for two specific answers:
    - **Playing of *Taps*:** When they mention Taps, watch **Taps** (1:00) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fmPWa7gL8k.
    - **Burial Flag:** When they mention that families get a burial flag, watch **American flag etiquette with the Marines** (1:37) YouTube video from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVYYdOQ8RvM.

Alternative options for Part IV based on students' skill level and availability of time:

- ***Learning Stations:*** *Create 4 learning stations around the room for students to rotate through. The 4 learning stations are the VHA reading page, the VBA reading page, the NCA reading page and a station at a computer to watch the two YouTube videos. Divide students into 4 groups and have them rotate when you tell them to rotate.*
- ***Jigsaw****: Divide your class into three groups and have each group read one of the pages and become "experts" on their VA organization. Once their reading and notes are complete in these groups. Rearrange students into groups of three with one expert from each reading. Have students teach their classmates and their VA organization.*

Part IV – Student Application and Review

- Review: Brown Bag Sorting Activity
  - *Activity*: Students will sort a range of physical objects and images into three groups representing the VHA, VBA and NCA. Students will justify their decisions of placement of their objects. This can be done in pairs or small groups. Teachers could prepare the same items in all bags or different items in bags and students could rotate to do this activity more than once.

- *Teacher Preparation*: Teacher needs to prepare the "brown bags." Use brown lunch bags or brown grocery bags. Collect a range of items and/or images for each bag. Items could include:
  - VHA – band aids, toy doctors' tools, etc.
  - VBA – real or fake money, piggy bank, pencil, school supplies, text book, toy houses or cars, etc.
  - NCA – tiny flags, mini Halloween headstones, paper copy of a PMC, toy bugle, etc.
  - Multiple - items like school supplies could count for VHA's teaching hospitals or the VBA's education benefits
  - Images – Possible images attached at the end of this file.

- Review: Brown Bag Project
  - *Project*: Students will create their own brown bags with items. They will identify at least three 3D items that represent the goods and services provided to veterans through the VHA, VBA, and NCA. Students will justify how their items show or explain services that these agencies provide to veterans. Lastly, students will explain that the VA is the part of the government responsible for taking care of U.S. veterans and will use their 3D items to explain specifically how the VA takes care of veterans.

Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Review Images: Brown Bag Sorting Activity

Images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Photo A

Photo B

Photo C

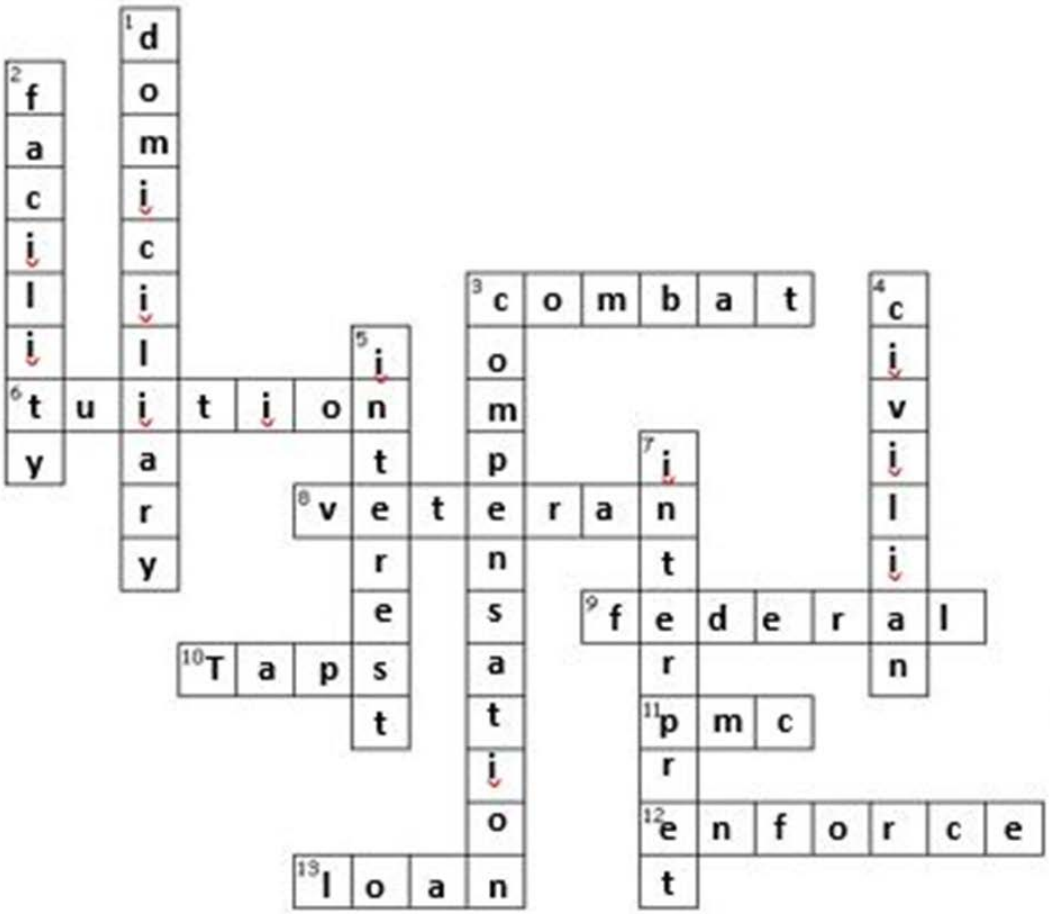
Photo D

Photo E

Photo F

The 3 Veterans Administrations: Crossword Answer Key

Directions: *Use the reading to help you complete the crossword.*



ACROSS

3. fighting
6. the cost of college or trade school classes
8. anyone who served the US in any of the branches the armed services
9. national
10. the name of the bugle call at the end of a military funeral
11. an engraved certificate signed by the President that honors a deceased veteran
12. to carry out
13. an amount of money a person or company borrows from a bank and must pay back

DOWN

1. a home for veterans
2. hospital, clinic, center or building
3. repayment for damages
4. non-military person or life
5. extra amount of money a bank earns from a loan
7. To decide the meaning of the law