

The Three Branches of Utah's Government

Summary

Enduring Understanding:

Students will understand the relationship between Utah's three branches of government.

Essential Questions:

1. What are the three branches of Utah's government?
2. What is the function of each branch of government?
3. What is the system of checks and balances?
4. How do Utah's three branches of government operate within the system of checks and balances?

Instructional Procedures

Adapted from the New York Times Learning Network

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Grade: 7

Subjects: Utah Studies, Government

Overview of Lesson Plan: In this lesson, students investigate the three branches of Utah's government and the system of checks and balances.

Suggested Time Allowance: 1 hour

Objectives:

Students will:

Identify the three branches of Utah's government.

Explain how the three branches of government operate within the system of checks and balances.

Develop and present a poster illustrating how the three branches of government operate within the system of checks and balances.

Resources / Materials

student journals

pens / pencils

paper

classroom blackboard

resources about Utah's Legislative Branch, Executive Branch, and Judicial Branch, as well as related information (civic textbooks, computers with Internet access, periodicals, library resources)

pieces of poster board or construction paper (one per small group)

markers

Background

: In order to best understand the reasons for and outcomes of the historical development of Utah's state government, students should have a basic understanding of the three branches of the American government, and the system of checks and balances before working with this lesson plan to assure their complete comprehension of its concepts. Several online encyclopedias have good, easy-to-understand information; try [Encarta Online - http://encarta.msn.com/](http://encarta.msn.com/) or [Britannica - http://www.britannica.com/](http://www.britannica.com/).

Activities / Procedures:

WARM-UP / DO NOW: Students respond to the following prompt in their journals (written on the board prior to class):

Fold a piece of paper in your journal into thirds vertically.

Label each column with a branch of Utah's government.

In each column, list ways in which that branch maintains and ensures the democratic

process.

After a few minutes, allow students to share their responses, and write student responses on the board in three columns. Discuss the following questions:

Do the branches have equal power?

How does each branch represent the beliefs and opinions of Utah's people?

Does it matter if a branch does not do what the public wants? Why or why not?

How do decisions in one branch impact the two other branches?

Divide students into three groups. Explain that each group will be assigned to one of the three branches of Utah's government. Each group will be responsible for researching and developing a short oral presentation to share with a small group of students in the class. Assign each group one of the branches of the Utah's government (executive, legislative, and judicial). Students should use all available classroom resources to research

What are the main roles and functions of your branch in Utah's state government as a whole?

How does your branch of government maintain and ensure the democratic process?

How does your branch of government help maintain the system of checks and balances?

After groups complete their research, "jigsaw" students so that they form groups of three, each group having one member representing each branch of Utah's government. Each member of the group should present his or her assigned branch of government to the other students in the group, focusing on the questions answered through the larger group research.

WRAP-UP / HOMEWORK: Each small group creates an illustrated poster showing how the three branches of Utah's government operates within the system of checks and balances. As follow-up after all groups have presented, each student should prepare a detailed explanation in response to the following question: "How does the system of checks and balances in Utah's government best serve our democratic process?" Students should present their opinions.

Authors

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