

The Impact of Local Government

Summary

Enduring Understanding:

Students will understand how local government impacts various aspects of daily life in their community.

Essential Questions:

1. What is local government?
2. What services does local government provide?
3. What kinds of issues does local government address?
4. Is your local government responsive to the needs of its citizens?

Instructional Procedures

Adapted from the New York Times Learning Network

The Impact of Local Government

Grade: 7

Subjects Utah Studies, Government

Overview of Lesson Plan: In this lesson, students will strengthen their understanding of the connection between their local government and the needs and interests of their community.

Suggested Time Allowance:: 45 minutes-1 hour

Objectives: Students will:

1. Reflect on the issues that are most important to them and their community.
2. Develop short surveys asking local citizens of voting age about their views on specific issues in the community.
3. Conduct and analyze surveys, assess which local officials are related in some way to the topics explored in the surveys, craft letters to these local politicians.

Resources / Materials:

- student journals
- pens/pencils
- paper
- classroom board
- resource materials about city government and civic structure (Utah Studies and government resources, reference books, local newspapers and periodicals, computers with Internet access)

Activities / Procedures:

1. As a class, brainstorm on the board major issues that are important in any community (such as education, health care, local labor laws and housing.) Ask students to explain what issues they feel are particularly important in their community. Divide students into small groups of three or four, and allow each to select one issue from the board, ensuring that each group selects a different issue. Then, have each group brainstorm a brief set of survey questions (five questions maximum) to be used in learning how citizens of voting age in your community feel about their chosen issue. The questions might be about the topic in general or about specific concerns that have already been in your local news. After the questions are developed, be sure that each student in the group has the exact wording copied.

WRAP-UP/HOMEWORK: Using her or her group's survey developed in class, each group member surveys a minimum of ten people of voting age who live in your community. In the next class period, groups meet again and calculate and analyze their findings. What were some of the general and specific concerns regarding their group's topic? How might each concern be addressed by local politicians? What local politicians would be related to the groups issue? Each member of the group identifies a different local politician. Then each student writes this politician a letter, in which he or she

explains the group's findings and inquires about that politician's take on the issue. Peer-edit the letters before mailing them. If possible, invite some local politicians to class for a round-table discussion about how the local government impacts various aspects of daily life in your community.

Evaluation / Assessment:

Students will be evaluated based on written journal responses, participation in whole class and small group discussions, survey distribution and analysis, and thoughtful letters to local politicians.

Authors

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