



Local Government - Cities and Towns | Lesson Plan

How does the structure of local government empower its citizens to shape their community, and why is understanding this structure essential for effective civic government?

Students will gain insights into the role and importance of local government in the United States, focusing on how it operates to serve community needs, manage resources, and engage citizens in governance.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key components of local government, including the roles of the mayor, city council, and municipal courts.
- Explain the differences between Dillon's Rule and Home Rule, and how each affects the powers of local governments, drawing insights from the worksheet.
- Analyze how property taxes fund local government services.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different forms of local government in meeting the needs of their communities.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Local Government:** The administration governing a local area, providing services and enforcing regulations.
- **Mayor:** The elected head of a city, town, or other municipality.
- **City Council:** The legislative body that governs a city or town responsible for making laws and policies.
- **Municipal Court:** Local courts that handle violations of city ordinances and some minor criminal offenses.
- **Dillon's Rule:** A legal principle that local governments have limited authority, and can only exercise powers expressly granted to them by the state government.
- **Home Rule:** The power of a local city or county to govern itself independently from the state.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Government

Materials Needed:

- Video: *Street Smarts: Local Government - Cities and Towns* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Local Government - Cities and Towns* (Click [Here](#))

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Start with a quick brainstorming session: Ask students what they know about their local government.
2. Write their responses on the board to gauge pre-existing knowledge and engage interest.
3. Briefly explaining the structure and role of a city council in local government. Highlight that the city council serves as the legislative body that makes decisions on local policies, budgets, and community issues.
4. Introduce the key vocabulary by writing the words and their meanings on the whiteboard.
5. Explain that today, students will watch a game-show-style video to learn about local government and why it's important.
6. Give each student a copy of the "Street Smarts: Local Government - Cities and Towns Worksheet."

Watch and Learn: (20 minutes)

1. Play the video. Pause at opportune moments to give students an opportunity to guess the response or discuss important points.
2. Students should fill out the worksheet while watching, identifying key components and roles within local government as mentioned in the video.

Wrap-Up: (15 minutes)

1. After the video, review the worksheet answers with the class, focusing on the roles of the mayor, city council, and municipal courts.
2. Explain Dillon's Rule and Home Rule, using examples from the worksheet to illustrate how powers are allocated to local governments.
3. Discuss how local governments are funded, emphasizing the role of property taxes.
4. Lead a class discussion evaluating different forms of local government, asking students to consider which might be most effective for various community sizes and needs.
5. Recap the lesson by summarizing the key roles and processes of local government.
6. Emphasize the importance of civic engagement and how understanding local government can empower them to participate in their communities.
7. Assessment:
 - Collect the completed worksheets to assess understanding and participation.
 - Consider a short written assignment where students express their views on the importance of federalism in contemporary society.

Optional Extension Activity:

Create a mock city council meeting to simulate the decision-making process in local government, applying understanding from the entire lesson to debate and resolve a community issue.

1. Assign each student a role: council members, mayor, city clerk, local reporters, and citizens. Provide each role with a brief description of their responsibilities and objectives.
2. Present a scenario that the council must address, such as a proposal to build a new park, implement a recycling program, or revise local traffic laws. Include potential benefits and challenges or opposition that the council might face.
3. Give the students a few minutes to prepare their points of view based on their assigned roles.
 - Council members and the mayor should consider the implications of the proposal, budget constraints, and public opinion.
 - Citizens prepare questions or statements supporting or opposing the proposal, focusing on how it will affect their daily lives.
 - Reporters prepare to take notes on the debate and key points, ready to summarize the council's decision-making process.
4. Conduct the meeting with the mayor or the city council president facilitating the discussion. Allow council members to debate the proposal, citizens to provide input during a public comment period, and reporters to ask follow-up questions.
5. Encourage everyone to use the key vocabulary terms introduced earlier, such as "local government," "mayor," "city council," and "public works."
6. After the mock meeting, discuss the outcomes and decisions made. Ask students to reflect on the challenges of balancing different interests and the role of civic engagement in shaping local policies.
7. Highlight how the roles they played contribute to effective local governance and the importance of participation in community affairs.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.