

Learning About Local Government through Rotating Stations

Overview

In this series of activities, students will gain understanding of the structure of municipal and county governments. The small-group setting allows for greater student involvement in discussion as well as encourages increased participation from all students.

Grade

10

NC Essential Standards for Civics & Economics

- CE.C&G.2.1- Analyze the structures of national, state and local governments in terms of ways they are organized to maintain order, security, welfare of the public and the protection of citizens
- CE.C&G.2.2- Summarize the functions of North Carolina state and local governments within the federal system of government
- CE.C&G.2.6- Evaluate the authority federal, state and local governments have over individuals' rights and privileges
- CE.C&G.2.7- Analyze contemporary issues and governmental responses at the local, state, and national levels in terms of how they promote the public interest and/or general welfare

Essential Questions

- How are different types of local government structures different?
- What services do local governments provide to its citizens?
- If one has questions about local government, where would she find the answers?
- How does local government affect citizens' (and students'!) daily lives?

Materials

- Learning Station One: Memory!
 - Memory cards- 20 key terms and concepts, attached
 - Student Direction Sheet, attached (one copy for placement at the station)
- Learning Station Two: County Government Internet Search
 - At least one computer with internet access
 - Student Worksheet, attached (one copy per student)
- Learning Station Three: City Government Internet Search
 - At least one computer with internet access
 - Student Worksheet, attached (one copy per student)
- Learning Station Four
 - Copy of Carolina K-12's "Local Government Works!" poster:
 - Free online version available here:
<http://www.civics.unc.edu/resources/docs/LocalGovernmentWorks.pdf>
 - Copy of class textbook
 - Student Direction Sheet, attached (one copy per student or per group, teacher's choice)

Procedure

1. Divide students into four groups with an average of 5 students per group. Teachers with larger classes may want to create two sets of the four stations and divide students into 8 groups.
2. Explain to students that they will be rotating between four stations. At each station, they will be exploring their local government.

3. Each station will take students approximately ten minutes. Allow one-two minutes for students to move to the next station. The total lesson can be completed in one 50-minute class.
4. Once students have completed all stations, ask them to share some things they learned. Probe student thinking by asking questions such as:
 - Was there any information on the county or city websites that surprised you? What information was new to your understanding?
 - Were the websites easy to navigate and was information easily accessible? Was there any information you could not find?
 - What examples did you find of intergovernmental revenue and cooperation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of levels of government working together?

Memory Game Cards

Home rule	Allows cities to write their own charters, choose their own type of government, and generally manage their own affairs
City Charter	Document granting power to a local government
Ordinance	City laws
Strong-Mayor System	Under this system, the mayor has strong executive powers, and tend to dominate city government
Number of North Carolina Counties	One hundred
Services provided by city government ONLY	Cemeteries, Sidewalks, Street Lighting, Traffic Control, Street Maintenance

Services provided by county government ONLY	Court facilities, mental health services, sheriff's department, social services, community colleges
Services provided by BOTH city and county governments	Airports, Libraries, Public Housing, Emergency Management, Fire Protection, Law Enforcement, Parks, Waste Disposal
LEA	Local Education Authority

Local Government Learning Station 1

Memory!

You are probably familiar with the game, Memory.

Matching cards are placed upside down on the desk in random order. Each student is allowed to turn two cards over. If they match, they are removed from the mix. If they don't, they are turned back over, and the next student can turn over two more. The student with the most pairs at the end of the game wins.

Remember that the purpose of this game is to review local government terms and concepts. Take your time!

Local Government Learning Station 2
County Government Internet Search

Use the internet and your group to answer the following questions.

1. We live in _____ County. Our official county website is:

2. How many people are on our Board of Commissioners? _____
3. How long are the Commissioners' terms? _____

4. What municipalities are in our county?

5. The official website for our public school system is:

6. Our school system is headed by a group of officials called _____.
They are elected for _____ year terms. Find your representative, and write
down their name and contact information:

7. County governments are also responsible for libraries. The official website for our library system
is:

There are _____ number of libraries in our county. The closest one to my home is:
_____.

8. In the time remaining, jot down any other services our county government provides:

Local Government Learning Station 3
City Government Internet Search

Use the internet and your group to answer the following questions.

1. I live in what municipality? _____
My school is located in what municipality? _____
The official website for my home city/town is:

2. Some important people in my municipal government are:

- a. _____ (mayor)
- b. _____ (city manager)
- c. _____ (city council representative)

Does your municipal government have at-large representatives? What does that mean? What would one argument be for having increased numbers of at-large representation?

3. One function of our city government is recycling. Find the Solid Waste/Recycling page off your city's website, and list a few items that are NOT recyclable:
4. Another function of our municipal government is to provide fire protection. Find the fire protection page off your city's website and record how many fire stations our city has. Try to find the station closest to your home.
5. The largest source of funding for the municipal government is property tax. Search through the website to find the tax rate for your home town/city.
6. In any remaining time, jot down more services provided by your city government.

