

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ***YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT***

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Your County Government

Lesson 4 of Civic Engagement Program

Skill Level

Intermediate (6th-8th graders)

Educational Standards

Supported

Citizenship Participation GC.31

Learner Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- Demonstrate what county government is and how you interact with it
- Demonstrate that county government touches the students' lives much more directly than state and federal governments do

Tag(s)

Citizenship

Time Needed

30-45 minutes

Materials Needed

Microsoft Chromebooks

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Introduction to Content

This is a simulation game where students are in charge of the county government. Students receive tax money and then decide the best way to spend it either by expanding the county services available or meeting citizens' needs.

At the end of the game, students must have enough "popularity" with the citizens to get re-elected.

Introduction to Methodology

Students will simulate a county government. In the game, "Counties Work," students will:

- Work to keep citizens happy and evaluate requests
- See what county departments have solutions
- Maintain a balanced budget by lowering or raising taxes
- Work to keep your citizens safe when crisis strikes



Setting the Stage/Opening Question

Say, “County government is kindergarten through 12th grade schools, the county roads you drive on and even the justice system. The justice system includes the sheriff and the local courts. Also, included in county government are animal shelters, ambulances/fire protection, garbage, and trash services.”

Experience

Ask, “Do you want to try your hand at running a county government? In “Counties Work,” you can! You will need to stay on top of resident requests as you develop the local community, make important budgeting decisions, and solve crises that pop up along the way.”

Say, “This web-based game was created with support from the National Association of Counties (NACo).”

Give youth the website and have them start the simulation:

icivics.org/games/counties-work

Students should start a new game. Tell them to choose the normal version as opposed to fast.

Have students name their county and choose a character. Then have them change the character title to “County Executive.”

Encourage youth to select a department. Then press “continue.”

Strategies to Increase Student Engagement

This is an opportunity for the youth to be in charge of decision making. Making decisions for a whole county or any group of people always sounds easy. Sometimes you are faced with two good options but can only choose one - how do you choose?

Share

Ask students to add up their funds at the end of the session or see who has the highest popularity.

Process

Ask students, “Did you find that you could say yes to every proposal? Were there some that you would not fund because it was too expensive or that it did not benefit the entire community?” **LET STUDENTS ANSWER.** Say, “It all depends on you as a leader, the validity of the citizen requests, and the needs that are unknown to the citizens that you want to be able to provide.”

Generalize

Say, “One of the strange things you learn as you grow up and mature is that you don’t always want what is best for yourself - you may want to eat ice cream for dinner, but eating a healthy dinner is better for your body. This can be said of the government also. Having a community pool and splash pad is cool, but if the road to get there is in disrepair, the pool probably isn’t the best use of resources. What other things do you think might benefit the community, but may not be as much of a need?”

Apply

Say, “When you get their driver’s license, car tags, visit the animal shelter, ride in an ambulance, and even attend school, these are all part of county government. Are there parts of the government that would mean more to you than to someone else? How would you balance what means the most or would benefit the whole community?”

References

icivics.org/static/TeachLocal.html

icivics.org/games/counties-work

Supplemental Information

Educational Standards Met

Citizenship Participation

Standard - GC.31

Describe what should be reasonably expected from any citizen or resident of the U.S., and explain why it is important for the well-being of the nation, including:

- Being informed on civic issues
- Serving in the military or alternative
- Obeying the law service
- Paying taxes
- Volunteering and performing public
- Respecting the rights of others service
- Serving as a juror
- Voting

TIPPS *Life Skills*

Head - Thinking

Heart - Relating, Caring

Hands - Working

Health - Being



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