Our Town
TEXAS

Middle School Curriculum
Teacher’s Guide and
Activity Handouts
Our Town, Texas

Middle School Curriculum

Presented by:

Texas City Management Association
Texas Foundation For Local Government

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Petrena Barnes
Project Coordinator
August 2000 - Austin
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Our Town, Texas, a curriculum for middle school and junior high students. Our Town, Texas uses informative, interactive classroom activities to help students master the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Social Studies and History. It also follows the guidelines for the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

Our Town, Texas was written by teachers and has been pilot tested by teachers. Activities are independent and can be taught separately or as a group. This text contains everything you need to teach all 17 activities.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

Blue Instructor Pages with “What”, “Why”, and “How” section headings that provide easy instructions, suggested teaching times, a materials list, and pertinent TEKS and TAAS skills. (Some lessons include additional instructor sheets such as answer keys.)

White Student Handouts ready to be photocopied and distributed.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

The Texas Foundation For Local Government is the educational foundation of the Texas City Management Association (TCMA). Located in Austin, TCMA is the professional association for City Managers and other local government management officials in Texas. It is an affiliate organization of the Texas Municipal League.

Our mission is to strengthen communities through innovative, effective educational programs for local officials, citizens, and children. If you have questions about this program, please visit our web sites at www.tcma.org, or www.ourtowntexas.org or call us at (512) 719-6300.
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I. Municipal Government Discovery

WHAT?
An introductory lesson that familiarizes the students with the various components of municipal government. This lesson presents a challenge and allows students a chance to approach the challenge, and discuss their results and the ways they approached the problem. This lesson will help students realize that their way of seeing a problem, even if it is different from the way others see it, is helpful in the process of learning.

Just as every town in Texas is unique in the way it prioritizes, sets up the local government power structure, and designs ordinances to meet the special needs of the community, so each student working on this assignment will see the assignment differently.

WHY?
• To stimulate student curiosity about municipal government
• To help begin thinking about the possibilities of governing their town
• To develop an orderly way of categorizing issues and seeing interrelationships among ideas
• To develop critical thinking skills and develop an awareness of their own thinking processes
• To encourage divergent thinking about a common issue

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Government:
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society
• Understand the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
• Uses problem-solving and decision making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 2: Economic Influences on U.S. History
• Objective 3: Political Influences on U.S. History
• Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U.S. History
• Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U.S. History
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:

- Index cards
- Chalkboard or overhead projector
- Municipal word list

Suggested Teaching Time: 45-50 minutes

Suggested Procedures:

1. **Focus the students to begin thinking about words that relate to municipal government.**

   a. As students enter the classroom, hand each student an index card with one item related to municipal government on the card. Use the attached list. Include the items that might be found in your town.

   b. You may wish to have the cards already on the desks with instructions on the chalkboard to begin thinking about what is on the index card.

2. **Familiarize the students with the process and the concept of identifying meaningful relationships.**

   a. You may wish to have students recall how difficult it would be to function in a world without organized categories of things, ideas, places, and so forth. You may mention categories of organization that they may take for granted in such places as grocery stores *(produce, canned foods, baked goods, cleaning supplies, etc.), school (grades, departments offices), or textbooks (units, chapter, subsections). The difficulty of using disorganized information or things in these settings will be obvious.

   b. You may wish to model a practice session on how to create categories out of chaos. With the whole class, work out on the chalkboard or overhead projector a sample using words that you make up or the following sample words.

   ```
   apple, sandwich, green, spaghetti, castle, yellow, mansion, olive, mobile home, hamburger, blue, spinach, red, banana, tent, blueberry, apartment, pizza
   ```

   The goal is to have students move beyond a simple matching of pairs of words (apples are red, or apple goes with banana) into thinking about many possible groupings for the words. Students will come up with varied groups: foods, fruits, Italian foods, colors, housing, things that are green (yellow, red). Some of the categories may overlap (foods and fruits) or be sub-categories of a more inclusive heading (housing, nomadic housing).

3. **Give students practice in discovering categories for a more complex and novel list of items related to the new unit about municipal government.** This part of the lesson is done with the entire class working together to determine how to group themselves in a meaningful way.

   a. Instruct students to interview each other to discover what other items are on the index cards. Students will then begin to group themselves into meaningful relationships determined by the item on the cards.

   b. You may wish to give limited direction toward categories such as “things we have in our town” and “things we do not have”, or “related jobs” or “related signs or structures”. Try not to allow more than five to eight minutes for this activity, to force students to act on their hunches and first impressions.

   c. Allow one or two minutes for the groups to identify and agree on their category.

4. **Have students share their discoveries with the class.** Remind students that there are no right answers, only different answers or answers that seem more useful or meaningful. List student-created categories on the board along with their relationship to that category. Ask which items in this activity were the most difficult to categorize and why.
Possible categories include:

- people who work in our town
- town buildings
- ways of communicating
- city services
- taxes
- paying for things
- people
- places
- necessities
- things you see in a town
- things related to elections
- big city features
- small town features

5. Reflect on the thinking process that the students used to develop their categories.

a. Have one student explain his or her approach to the task in detail, and then solicit the approaches used by other students.

b. Write the steps that the students used on the overhead projector.

- Students will likely not be accustomed to reflecting on the process of how they did an assignment once they have finished it. Remind them that if they had success on the task, they will want to be able to repeat their success, so they should be aware of HOW they succeeded, not only THAT they succeeded.

- Remind students that throughout their lives, they will need to figure out how to do new things, and they will be more successful if they start actively reflecting on how a process evolved.

- Ways that students approached the problem might include:
  - trying to find as many items as possible by talking to many of the students
  - trying to find one other person who had an item similar to mine
  - trying to discover any pattern
  - trying to figure out broad categories and then find students who matched any of the broad categories.

c. Discuss how students dealt with the task when they could find any relationship between the items.

- Did they continue to discuss possible relationships or did they move on to another person?
- If a student ran into problems approaching the task, brainstorm with the class ways to solve a similar task in the future.

d. Ask students to try to identify what “clicked” in their minds when they “got the hang” of the assignment. Go into the specifics of how far along they were in the assignment, which items they had trouble with, which items seemed really obvious, and so forth.

6. Have students devise a fitting title for their categories. Share ideas as a class.

Follow-Up Possibilities: As warm-up activities on subsequent days, put up some words learned in the previous day’s lesson. Have students figure out the category that joins the words together conceptually.

Evaluation: You may wish to give students credit for class participation.
Municipal Government Word List

mayor
councilmember
city manager
police officer
fire fighter
engineer
park superintendent
sanitation worker
lawyer
accountant
tax collector
planning board member
librarian
civic center
town hall
city jail
wastewater treatment plant
city park
fire station
police station
clerk’s office
tax collector’s office
ballot
traffic signal
yield sign
street light
bonds
ordinances
charter
public hearing
town council meeting
pamphlets
parking meters
sales tax
park entrance fees
traffic tickets
property taxes
garbage fees
II. The Quality of Life in Our Town

WHAT?
Students will examine their town and its relative strengths and weaknesses.

WHY?
To distinguish fact from opinion
To explain ways in which geographic factors have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas
To analyze their hometowns and the impact of human activities on the natural environment of the state
To move beyond global judgment (this is a nice place to live, or this is a sorry town) into a more thoughtful judgment of specific elements that interact to form their town
To describe how people from selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture
To draw conclusions
To encourage divergent thinking about a common issue

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

**Geography:**
- Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
- Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

**Government:**
- Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
- Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

**Citizenship:**
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
- Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

**Culture:**
- Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

**Social Studies Skills:**
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

**Communicate in written, oral, and visual form**
- Uses problem-solving and decision making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

**TAAS:**
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials needed:
• One copy per student of the Quality of Life continuum worksheet
• If you wish, a bulletin board space with a continuum line on it

Suggested Teaching Time: 30 minutes

Suggested Procedures:

1. **Introduce the concept of a continuum.** Explain how it is more expressive than a simple yes-no answer because it allows the student the chance to show shades of opinion. Perhaps do an example or two of how to use a continuum.
   a. Let’s imagine that the continuum will be used to measure opinions about who should be allowed to vote in elections.
      
      Voters should include:
      
      X __________________________________________ X
      Everyone                  No one

      b. Most people will not think that every living person should be allowed to vote, so very few people would mark an X at the far left of the continuum. On the other hand, very few people believe that no one should have the right to vote. Where you place your mark will reflect which side of the continuum expresses your opinion best. Try not to place your mark in the very middle; instead try to show which side of the continuum reflects your general idea about the issue.

2. **Hand out the Quality of Life continuum worksheets and ask students to complete them.** Circulate among desks to field questions, especially if students have not tried out this type of task before.

3. Ask students to suggest one or two of the items that seem most interesting to them. Discuss these as a class.

   a. One approach is to indicate a continuum on the floor and ask students to take a stand at the point on the continuum that expresses their opinion. Then have students on either side of the continuum give their best factual evidence to support their positions. You will probably want to rotate between the sides, as in an informal debate, to allow each side a chance to express its views. Ask students to stay focused on specific facts to support their ideas, either gathered from the news or personal observation, such as a specific park’s attractions, or huge potholes on a particular road, or an instance of excellent medical care. Help students distinguish the benefits and drawbacks of anecdotal accounts to support their generalizations.

   b. Another approach is to use a bulletin board continuum. Label the extreme positions on the continuum and then have the students tape, tack, or staple their opinions on the board. Have students write their names on index cards or other small papers and use these to mark their positions on the continuum. The bulletin board might look like this (in abbreviated form!):

      Voters should include:
      Bob                      Maria  Yvette  Mike
      Joe  Susan  Jose         James  Barbara
      X __________________________________________ X
      Everyone                  No one

   c. Inevitably there is a student who is shy about stating an opinion, does not feel he or she knows enough to express an opinion, or is genuinely stumped by the task. These students can be super valuable to your discussion. You can direct the students who do have opinions to try to persuade the undecided students. The undecided pupils have as their task to determine which argument was most persuasive. These undecided folks may still not have an opinion they are willing to share, but they can give feedback about the different arguments offered by others. If the undecided ones do wish to state an opinion after the discussion, allow them to do so. Also, if students wish to change their position on the continuum, allow this to be done, too. If there is a mass change, examine with students the reasons for their change of opinion.
Follow-Up Possibilities: You may wish to leave the continuum up for all your classes, so that students can see 1) the questions of interest to the other classes, and 2) how people they know stood on the question. Leaving the continuum up for several days inevitably sparks lively discussion about why people voted as they did, who changed their minds, and so forth—just the kind of lively civic discussion our communities need.

You could also invite students to bring in evidence to support their opinions and place that on the bulletin board. They might cut out articles and editorials from the town newspaper, bring in photographs or informative pamphlets, or conduct their own informal polls and bring back quotations from residents in town or other students. Then have students evaluate the relative strength of each form of evidence, and decide whether it is a fact or an opinion.

Evaluation: You could grade the continuum itself, or have students do a writing assignment that extends that lesson. For example, you could ask students to write a paragraph about “The Best (or Worst) Thing about Our Town” in which they expand upon their ideas and defend their overall judgments.
The Quality of Life in Our Town

Municipal governments have as one of their main jobs providing the best possible quality of life for the town. Everyone’s ideas about a good quality of life are different, and so every town is different. Some people like big cities with many events to choose from; others like a quiet, calm place to live. Some people like towns where residents share common values; other people prefer towns where many different kinds of people and cultural groups live. Many Texans like towns with modern buildings; others think historic towns with older buildings are more interesting.

One of the things that town governments do is represent townspeople’s ideas about what makes a good quality of life. If most people in town think that preserving open land is important, for example, the city government will think twice before allowing a large building to be constructed on a site. If, however, the town’s residents badly need the jobs that would come from the constructing and operating the building, the town government would be likely to approve the project.

To be able to participate effectively in your town’s government, you have to know what you like about your town. You also have to know what you think should be changed. Take a few minutes and consider the things that you like and dislike about your town, and mark your opinion on the continuums below. Just place an X at the spot along the line that reflects your opinion. (There are no right and wrong answers here, so put down what you REALLY think.)

Our town:

X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
1. is too big (in population) is too small
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
2. has great transportation (roads, buses) has very poor transportation
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
3. has plenty of recreation and sports facilities has far too few such facilities
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
4. has plenty of parks has far too few parks
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
5. is clean and pleasant to live in is dirty and unpleasant
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
6. has enough fine medical care has inadequate medical care
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
7. is a very safe place to live is very unsafe
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
8. has taxes that are much too high has taxes so low they don’t buy what we need
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
9. has a booming economy has bad economic problems
X ___________________________________________________________________________________________ X
10. has fine municipal leaders has bad city leaders
Name ________________________________

Next, tell why you put the X where you did on each continuum.

1. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

4. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

5. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

6. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

7. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

8. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

9. __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

10. __________________________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________________________

Our Town Texas ★ Activity II – continued
III. Keeping Current with Events in Our Town

WHAT?
Students will read newspaper articles actively and critically to help themselves become more aware of municipal issues and more thoughtful as they consider events in the local news.

WHY?
To stimulate curiosity about current issues
To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
To develop an orderly way of categorizing issues and seeing interrelationships among ideas
To develop critical-thinking skills and develop an awareness of their own thinking processes
To encourage divergent thinking about a common issue

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Economics:
• Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world

Government:
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society
• Understand the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form:
• Uses problem-solving and decision making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 5: Historical Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
How?

Materials Needed:
- News issues to discuss: news articles brought in by students, teacher, a class set of newspapers, a taped television news story, or whatever else may be pertinent.
- One copy per student of the Municipal News Evaluation Sheet, or a copy of the form on an overhead transparency.

Suggested Teaching Time: 45-50 minutes, but will vary greatly, depending on the degree to which students are informed and have strong opinions about the news, and the number of different issues that are brought up for discussion at a particular time.

Suggested Procedures:

1. Provide students with current events information, through reading (aloud or silently) a news article, or watching a taped news broadcast. News stories that would be especially conducive to this type of study would be those reporting statistics about local government, covering such topics as elections, town budget process, crime statistics or other articles about your town.

2. Have students complete the attached chart about the content of the article and their own thoughts about it. Discuss the issue and the process of thinking about it.

3. You may wish to group students in threes or fours to work cooperatively. Provide only one copy of the Municipal News Evaluation Sheet per group.

4. Have the students (in groups) read the same article or watch the same tape. Then have them discuss what they read using the Municipal News Evaluation Sheet with one student acting as the scribe.

Follow-Up Possibilities: The class could choose a local issue and follow its development over time. Some students may also find their views of the issue changing from their initial impression as they become more informed about the topic. You may wish to ask students to reconsider their original opinions to see if they have changes at all.

Evaluation: These evaluation sheets can be graded for clarity and completeness. You may wish to give a participation grade or group grade.
Municipal News Evaluation Sheet

1. The Way It Is: Reality as described in this article
   a. Main idea of the news story. Go beyond just naming a topic; also tell the point made about the topic. (For example, do not simply put “police officers’ salaries”; instead, put “police officers are happy with pay raise” or “town police are lowest paid in Texas.”

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

   b. Facts that support this idea, or details about this idea:

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

2. The Way I See It: If you have your own ideas about this topic, write them here.
   a. My ideas: _____________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

   b. Where I learned these things or how I came to have these ideas. (“Ms. Jones taught us that___” or “my parents say that ___”)

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

3. The Way It Will Probably Be in the Future: My predictions about what will happen about this topic in the future.

   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
4. The Way I Think It Should Be: How should this issue be resolved?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. A Way to Make A Difference: If I want to help my solution happen, what could I do this week or this month?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. There Ought to Be a Law!: Is there a law or ordinance that would make the situation better? Write down your idea for a law that might help.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Now look over your idea for a law.

- Is it clear? (Read your idea to another student and ask him or her to tell you what they think it means.)
- Can people follow it? (Is it physically possible for people to follow it? Does it cost huge amounts of money or time to follow it?)
- Can it be enforced? (Is there an easy and clear way to tell if someone has broken the law?)
- Is there a reasonable penalty or punishment if someone breaks the law? (Does the punishment fit the crime?)
IV. Seeing the Possibilities for Sharing Power in Our Local Government

**WHAT?**
Students will identify ways that power is divided and shared in several typical forms of local government found in Texas.

**WHY?**
- To develop an orderly way of categorizing issues and seeing interrelationships among ideas
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

*Government:*
  - Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
  - Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

*Citizenship:*
  - Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
  - Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society
  - Understand the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society

*Culture:*
  - Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

*Social Studies Skills:*
  - Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

*Communicate in written, oral, and visual form*
  - Uses problem-solving and decision making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

*TAAS:*
  - Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
  - Objective 3: Political Influences in U. S. History
  - Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
  - Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:
- For each small group you will form in your class, and for yourself, make a packet of symbols from the attached sheet, overhead projector, felt board, or chalk board

Suggested Teaching Time: one class period

Suggested Teaching Procedures:
1. In advance of the lesson, prepare envelopes of symbols from the attached sheet, or if you prefer, have students cut out the symbols themselves at the start of the lesson. You will want to have your own set of symbols to manipulate on the overhead to show the possibilities of power distribution.

2. To familiarize students with the use of symbols to show power and authority, have students use the symbols to show the distribution of power in their own school. They will want to include, at the very least, a principal, teachers, students, and perhaps will add the student council, assistant principals, custodians, PTA, or even school board and voters, depending on their knowledge. Their diagrams will probably look something like this:

3. Encourage students to think of different ways to arrange the power diagram and the advantages and disadvantages of each, including costs, efficiencies, balancing of power, benefits of individuals’ experience, etc. (What if the principal chose the student council? What if the PTA decided what the custodians should do? What if the assistant principal decided how the cafeteria staff should do its job? What if students decided grades?) Such a discussion could spiral out of control rather quickly, unless you are redirecting students to think about real advantages and real disadvantages—long and short term.

4. Then, introduce in a very general way, the concept of power at the municipal level and the key players of citizens, registered voters, voters, mayors, councilmembers, city managers, department heads, and municipal employees. Arrange your symbols on the overhead in various ways to show possible distribution of power at the local level. (Or have students work in small groups and manipulate the symbols into various forms.)

5. Have students reflect on the power that would be held by people in each arrangement, and the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement from various citizens’ perspectives. Your discussion would include showing power in various configurations, including the “real” ones from Texas cities, shown below.

For illustration and contrast, you may wish to show some configurations that are not democratic, so that students see the value of their town’s distribution of local government power. For this, arrange the symbols to place voters at the bottom of the chart, being told what to do by town officials. Or you may wish to select one or two departments such as the police or fire departments to have authority over the mayor and council, and ultimately the voters. Have students reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of these distributions of power.

6. After your discussion, introduce labels for the main forms of city government in Texas: strong mayor-council form (Plan A), weak mayor-council form (Plan C), and the council-manager form (Plan B).
- Hand out the unlabeled sheet of diagrams and have students give each chart a title and label all positions on the chart. The labeling can be done individually and then student teams can compare their answers, the whole class can go over the correct answers in a teacher-directed lesson, or student teams can figure the chart out together.
- Have students color the elected officials (mayors and councilmembers who are in the “hot seat” of elective accountability) RED and the town’s employees (city departmental workers who are more removed from the “hot seat”) BLUE. If your town has a mayor and councilmembers who are paid, you may wish to adopt another color scheme—perhaps red and blue stripes or a blend of red and blue.
Follow-Up Activities: For the next several days following this lesson, you may wish to have your warm-up be a copy of the blank, unlabeled diagram on an overhead transparency. Have students review the names of each form of government and the officials who fill the various positions on the chart.

Evaluation: You may wish to grade the accuracy of student’s diagrams. This material is easily tested in writing.

Teacher Key:

Forms of Texas Municipal Government

Plan A

- citizens
- registered voters
- participating voters
- mayor
council
- city departments

Plan B

- citizens
- registered voters
- participating voters
- city council
- city manager
- city departments

Plan C

- citizens
- registered voters
- participating voters
- mayor / council
- city departments
- other elected officers
- their city departments
V. An Overview of Local Governments in Texas

**WHAT?**
Students will apply information about local government, their jurisdictions and responsibilities to pose and answer questions.

**WHY?**
- To compare places and regions of Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics
- To explain ways in which geographic factors have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas
- To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
- To develop an orderly way of categorizing issues and seeing interrelationships among ideas
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

**Geography:**
- Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas.
- Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

**Government:**
- Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
- Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

**Citizenship:**
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
- Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society
- Understand the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society

**Social Studies Skills:**
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

**Communicate in written, oral, and visual form**
- Uses problem-solving and decision making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

**TAAS:**
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials needed:
• Copies of the lesson sheets for all students

Suggested teaching time: at least one class period

Suggested Procedures:
1. Introduce the factual material in the lesson, “An Overview of Local Governments in Texas” and allow students to complete the questions that accompany the information. You may want to teach this in parts and in conjunction with other, more interactive lessons.

   Discuss student answers. When students have not thought of possibilities, encourage more divergent thinking.

Follow-Up Possibilities: For your warm-up activity, have a short list of local government functions on the overhead. Ask students to divide the list into county functions and city functions. Since some responsibilities overlap, ask students to make special note of those.
What IS local government, anyway?

At some time in your life you have probably learned about federalism and the fact that government in our nation is shared among the federal, state, and local levels. This simple division gets a little more complicated when you realize that there is not just one “local level” the way there is just one “federal level” or one “state level” for Texas. In fact, even in your very own city or town, there is not just one “local level” of government. Altogether in our state, even though there are fewer than 1,500 cities, there are more than 4,000 local government units that make decisions and provide services for people.

1. Just for fun, list as many local government units as you can think of in your area.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Many of these local governmental units perform special functions. In 1990, for example, Texas had 1,892 special districts and 1,113 school districts, in addition to its 1,171 cities and 254 counties. Right this minute, the only one of those numbers that is still probably accurate is the number of counties, which has stayed the same for over 100 years. The number of cities and special districts has been increasing steadily since that count was made in 1990. On the other hand, the number of school districts has been shrinking as districts merge together to provide better opportunities for students at a lower cost.

2. Why do you think the number of cities and special districts in Texas is increasing?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

3. In what parts of Texas do you think school districts should be consolidating or joining together with other school districts? Explain.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Background: What municipal governments do NOT do in Texas

Each unit of local government was created to meet a special need of the people in that locality, or specific area. Over time, as the needs of people in Texas changed, the nature of local government has been able to respond. Because the municipal, or town and city governments are just one part of the local level, let’s take a look at what functions city governments do not have to do. These functions are already taken care of by other local government units.
What do County Governments Take Care Of?

County governments in Texas are called “general purpose” because they do so many things. You have probably heard of general purpose cleansers, for example, that can clean many different things. Similarly, a “general purpose” government governs or has responsibility for many different things in an area. There are two main categories of jobs that county governments have.

First, county governments provide governmental services for their residents. As you read this list, notice how very basic some of these county services are.

Counties: 1.) build and take care of roads, jails, and courts, 2.) enforce laws, through the county sheriff’s department, and 3.) provide health and welfare services. For example, counties often have medical clinics, emergency medical services (EMS), county parks, and community centers.

4. Tonight, look in a telephone book under “county government” or the exact name of your county. Figure out which number to call if you need to report a county road that needs a repair. When the county fixes that road problem, it is performing a governmental service. County road repair phone number: ________________________________

Second, county governments provide administrative services on behalf of the state. The state administrative services that county governments do usually involve records that need to be kept and fees that need to be collected. The 254 Texas counties act as “agents” of the state government in their area when they help county residents with this record-keeping. Examples of administrative services performed by county governments include voter registration and motor vehicle licensing.

5. Check in the phone book. Which county government office would you call if you need to help an adult register to vote? ________________________________

What do Special District Governments Do?

These interesting units of local government were created to do just one special task. Usually the general purpose county government could not do that task, so a special district was formed. You will already know about some special districts such as school districts, but may not know about water supply districts, hospital authorities, utility districts, or mosquito control districts.

6. Look in your phone book to see if there are any special districts in your area. Write their names down here: ________________________________________________

What do Municipal Governments Do?

Of all the kinds of local governments in Texas, city and town governments in Texas perform the largest number of functions. The responsibilities of cities and towns can be put into two categories: governmental functions and proprietary functions.

Governmental functions of cities are similar to the governmental services of counties that you just learned about. These 34 governmental responsibilities are given to cities by state law. They include: 1.) police and fire protection, 2.) health and sanitation services, 3.) street construction and design, 4.) transportation systems, such as bus lines, and 5.) building and maintaining jails.
State law lists three **proprietary functions** of cities:
1. operating a public utility, such as an electric department,
2. operating amusements owned by the city, and
3. performing activities that are ultra hazardous or dangerous.

**Kinds of Municipalities in Texas**

In your own life, you have probably done things for two main reasons: because you wanted to and because you were told to do something. When you were small, you had fewer choices about what to do; other people decided what was good for you. As you have grown, the opportunities for you to make decisions for yourself have probably increased. The same holds true for cities in Texas. When cities are small, they have fewer choices and the state makes many of the decisions about what cities may and may not do. As cities grow, they have more and more choices about what they want to do and how they want to be.

Small villages, towns, and cities in Texas are **general law municipalities**. These towns usually have fewer than 5,000 people and their powers of local governance are limited by state laws. If state law does not give a general law city the power to do something, the city may not do it, no matter what. About 3 out of 4 cities in Texas, or 75 percent of Texas municipalities, are general law cities.

**Very Small Towns**

To become a general law city, an area must have 210 to 10,000 residents and it must “incorporate.” You may have noticed signs along the highway that announce the limits of incorporated cities and towns. These signs mark the limits of the authority of that town’s government. Outside of that boundary line, the county government probably has **jurisdiction**, or controlling power.

7. Why would state law make it be illegal for an area with 5 or 10 people to become a city?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

8. In a small town of this size, do you think it would be better to be governed by 3 persons (commission members) or 6 persons (aldermen)? Explain your thinking.
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
Larger Towns

When a larger city with more than 600 people incorporates, it has more choices about its government. These larger municipalities are governed by a city council. If the city council is elected at-large, it must have a mayor and 5 councilmembers. Each member of the council is supposed to vote on ordinances and rules in a way that represents the needs of the whole city, or the city “at large.”

Another way to elect members is to divide the city into wards, or voting districts. A mayor presides over the city council. The city council decides what officials are needed, and decides if the city council or the voters will choose these officials.

A city may choose to have a city manager to run it. The city manager is a paid employee of the city. He or she is hired by the city council to supervise the everyday operations of the city. The city manager makes many decisions about how to do things, just like a store manager makes many decisions about how a store will be run. The city manager takes instructions from the city council, which has the final say on all the big policy decisions. When the council decides policy issues, it decides how much the city government will do. For example, a city council might decide that the city should build an airport. The council would instruct the city manager to come up with possible locations, and ways to pay for building and running the airport. The council would choose what it thought was the best plan for the city, and the city manager would make sure that the airport was built and operated well.

Home Rule Cities

If you live in a city with more than 5,000 residents, chances are very good that yours is a home rule city. Home rule cities have the right to run their local governments without a lot of interference from the state government. Many people like the home rule idea because it allows people at the “grassroots” level to make decisions. To become a home rule city, your town must have adopted a home rule charter. A charter is a written plan for government that describes how power is divided among leaders and citizens in your city. At some time in your town’s history, the charter was approved by the majority of the voters in an election. Any time a change in the charter is suggested, the people in your town have an opportunity to vote on the change.

Notice that the voters in home rule cities hold much power over the way their town is run. Voters decide:

1. the form of local government: mayor-council or council-manager, for example,
2. the number of members of city council,
3. the way councilmembers will be elected: at-large, by single member district, or by place, which is a numbered seat on the council,
4. how long councilmembers’ terms of office should be,
5. whether councilmembers’ terms of office should overlap,
6. how the mayor is to be chosen, either by the council or by the voters, and;
7. which boards and commissions are necessary to make the town run smoothly.

These powers are very important ones to be held in a town. Another power of home rule cities is the power to annex land next to the city, with or without the permission of persons living in the area. When an area is annexed, it is added to the area of the city and becomes part of the city.

9. Why would a city like having the power to annex land?
Name ___________________________________________________

10. Why would a city not want to annex all the nearby land that it possibly could?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Another advantage of being a home rule city is that voters have special powers that they do not have in general law cities. One of these powers is called **initiative**. When a person initiates something, he or she starts or introduces something. In a home rule city, voters may take the initiative to place a question on the ballot to be voted on by all citizens. Initiative gives ordinary citizens the power to make sure their ideas are put into effect. This power is important if their elected councilmembers refuse to act on an idea for some reason. Initiative begins with a **petition** signed by enough registered voters to have the item placed on the ballot. Then the city council may vote on the idea or it may call an election to vote on it.

11. How does initiative limit the power of city councilmembers?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Citizens in home rule cities also have the power to **repeal** unwanted ordinances. When an ordinance is repealed, it is taken off the books and ceases being a law in the town. Like initiative, repeal also begins with a petition signed by voters. After the petition is received, the city council may repeal the ordinance or it must call for an election to decide about the ordinance.

12. What might be a possible danger of giving citizens the right to repeal city ordinances?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Even with these important powers, there are limits on what home rule cities can do. Home rule cities must always follow the state constitution and state laws. For example, state law sets maximum amounts of property tax that citizens may pay, and cities may not charge more than that amount. Also, cities may only hold elections on days that state law allows.

13. Why would the state want elections to be held only on certain days? Why can a town not hold an election every single day if it wants to?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
Possible Answers to An Overview of Local Governments in Texas

2. The number of cities is increasing as: cities form to prevent themselves from being annexed or to remove themselves from the jurisdiction of a larger city; the area’s population may have increased; jobs in the area may have increased; citizens may feel the need for city services.

3. School districts tend to consolidate in areas in which it is more cost effective to combine with another district to provide specialized services at a lower cost. These areas are usually rural, with a small school age population.

7. If an area has at least 200 persons living there, it will be more likely to remain a settlement than a smaller area. It is easier for hundreds of people to support government services in an area than it is for a very small number. One family, cult, small group or organization could have power over an area if there were not a larger minimum number of citizens.

8. The larger ruling body allows the possibility for greater diversity of opinion and the spreading out of power among a larger group. The small group size may be less expensive and may allow for easier and faster decision making.

9. Annexing helps an area increase its tax base, it allows the city to change the ethnic or socio-economic demographic profile of the city, it allows areas for the city’s growing population to expand without sacrificing income from property taxes, and allows the city a place to grow.

10. It would have to provide increased services to a larger area, which can be expensive. If the area to be annexed does not have high potentially taxable property, the city budget might be stretched to provide services to the enlarged area. The start-up costs of expanding city services can be great.

11. People can take power to run some aspect of their city if they do not accept the city council’s approach.

12. There may be costs to an action, or bad problems that could arise that most citizens do not realize. It is more complicated to do the city’s business this way.

13. Holding elections on set days that are announced well in advance to the public allows good public awareness of the election and affords all registered voters a chance to participate. If election days were set at the whim of a leader or a small group of people, they could deliberately be set at times when people opposed to their view would be unlikely to be able to participate.
VI. Comparing Cities in Texas

WHAT?
Students will read and interpret charts, make graphs, and draw conclusions about trends in Texas municipal government.

WHY?
• To compare places and regions of Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics
• To explain ways in which geographic factors have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas
• To develop an orderly way of categorizing issues and seeing interrelationships among ideas
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
How?

Materials needed:
• Copies of worksheets for students:
  1. a class set of the two charts will be enough (Home Rule Cities in Texas, and 35 Home Rule Cities Chartered in Texas between 1983 and 1993) or
  2. one copy of each chart for each student
• Either graph paper, rulers, and compasses enough for all students to use or share or copies of the blank pie graphs on the attached worksheet, one per student or group of students
• Transparencies of the two charts

Suggested Teaching Time: about one class period, depending upon the skills of your students

Suggested Procedures:
1. Assess the ability of your students to read and interpret charts. Go over the basics of the first chart you will have them use.
2. Give them the worksheets and have them complete the questions. It may be productive to have students begin working on it in class.
3. You may wish to have the second chart be homework, or you may prefer to have students begin working on it in class.
4. After students have finished working, debrief the process of working with the charts. What went well? What was hard?
   What did they learn about chart reading? What could be done to improve the charts themselves?

Follow-up possibilities: Ask questions about the transparency of the chart the day following the assignment. (Which city is older, B or Y? What form of government does H use? How long has it used this form? and so forth)

Evaluation: You may choose to grade one or both sets of answers. Application of the skill of reading charts is easily tested. You may wish to use one of the charts again, or to save one of the charts to use as a part of the test.
Home Rule Activity VI-A

Home Rule Cities in Texas,
as reported by the cities themselves in May 1993

Look over the chart below.  It shows a randomly selected sample of home rule cities in Texas.  (There are many more home rule cities in Texas!)  Then answer the questions below.

Chart A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Current Form of Municipal Government</th>
<th>Year Current Form Adopted</th>
<th>Year of First Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abilene</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballinger</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childress</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastland</td>
<td>Commission-Manager</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendswood</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorman</td>
<td>Mayor-Commission</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlingen</td>
<td>Commission-Manager</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irving</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kermit</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaFeria</td>
<td>Commission-Manager</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes</td>
<td>Commission-Manager</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Braunfels</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quanah</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas City</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uvalde</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidor</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weatherford</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoakum</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions For Chart A

1. Explain in your own words what each of the four columns shows.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

2. If you want to know when a city was originally started, which column do you use?

____________________________________________________________________________________

3. If you want to know how long a city has had a form of government, what do you have to do with the information in the third column?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

4. If you want to tell if a town has changed the kind of government it uses, where on the chart should you look?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

5. Of the towns listed, which one was chartered first?

____________________________________________________________________________________

6. Of all the towns listed, how many still have the same form of government that they did when they were first chartered?

____________________________________________________________________________________

7. Which city has had the same form of government for the longest time?

____________________________________________________________________________________
Name ________________________________________________

8. Name a city that changed its form of government within five years of its original charter.

______________________________________________________________________________________

9. Name two cities that do not use a city manager form of government.

______________________________________________________________________________________

10. Which city switched over to a mayor-council form of city government most recently?

______________________________________________________________________________________
Our Town Texas  ★  Activity VI – continued

Answer Key-Chart A

1. The columns show the cities studied, the kind of city government used in each town, the year each town started using the form of government it now uses, and the year the town first became a home rule city.

2. If you want to know when a city was originally started, use the last column, ‘year of first charter.’

3. If you want to know how long a city has had a form of government, subtract ‘year current form adopted’ from ‘year of first charter.’

4. If you want to tell if a town has changed the kind of government it uses, look to see whether the ‘year current form adopted’ and ‘year of first charter’ are the same.

5. Palestine was chartered first, in 1871.

6. Seven still have the same form of municipal government.

7. Yoakum, chartered in 1915, has had the same form of government for the longest time.

8. Cities that changed form of government within five years of the original charter include Eastland, Mercedes, and New Braunfels.

9. Ballinger, Gorman, Texas City, and Vidor do not have a city manager.

### Home Rule Activity VI-B

#### Chart B

**35 Home-Rule Cities Chartered in Texas between 1983 and 1993**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Current Form of Municipal Government</th>
<th>Year Current Form Adopted</th>
<th>Year of First Charter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benbrook</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowie</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caddo Mills</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Park</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver City</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimmitt</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everman</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredericksburg</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granbury</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Village</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey Village</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaufman</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kermit</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirby</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaGrange</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeway</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lampasas</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marble Falls</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecos</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plano</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Isabel</td>
<td>Commission-Manager</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richland Hills</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockport</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusk</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachse</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1986</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saginaw</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1988</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southlake</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomball</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watauga</td>
<td>Mayor-Council</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West University Place</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wylie</td>
<td>Council-Manager</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages: Practice your math skills with this chart. Remember that a percentage is a way of showing a relationship between a part and the whole. In this exercise, the whole will always equal 35, because there are a total of 35 cities described in the chart. In finding a percentage, you divide the part by the whole, or 35 in this case. If 10 cities out of 35, for example, were in South Texas, and you wanted to find the percentage of cities in South Texas, your math would be set up like this:

\[
\frac{35}{10} = \frac{35}{10.00}
\]
Name ________________________________________________

Questions For Chart B

The number will always be a fraction, in this case 0.2857, or about 29 percent.
Now try some percentages on your own.

1. How many of the 35 cities use a council-manager form of government today?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

2. What percentage of the whole use this council-manager form?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

3. How many cities use a mayor-council form of government?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

4. What percentage do these cities in #3 represent?

______________________________________________________________________________________

5. What other form of government is used?

______________________________________________________________________________________

6. Now express this information in a pie graph, properly labeled. Show the percentage of the whole that use the mayor-council form, the council-manager form, and ‘other.’
7. How many cities changed their form of municipal government between the first charter and the present?

______________________________________________________________________________________

8. What percentage does this represent?

______________________________________________________________________________________

9. Subtract that number from 100 percent to find the difference. This number represents the percentage of cities that have always kept the same form of government.

______________________________________________________________________________________

10. Express these relationships on a pie chart. Show the percentage of cities which have changed their form of municipal government, and the percentage of cities with the same form of government from the original charter.

** If you had to identify a trend or a pattern shown in these numbers, what would it be?

______________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________
**Answer Key-Chart B**

1. 29 of the 35 cities use a council-manager form of government.

2. 82.85% (or 86%) of all cities on the chart use the council-manager form.

3. 5 cities use a mayor-council form of government.

4. 14.28% (or 14%) use the mayor-council form.

5. Mayor-Commission is also used.

6. More than 3/4 of the pie graph should show the council-manager form.

7. 8 cities have changed their form of municipal government.

8. 22.85% (23%) have changed their form of government.

9. 77.15% (77%) have not changed their form of government.

10. A bit more than 3/4 of the pie graph should show cities that have kept the same form of government.

** The patterns seem to be that recently-chartered cities tend to use the council-manager form of government. Most recently-chartered cities have not yet changed the form of their municipal government. Some students may assume that the lack of change of form shows satisfaction with the current form. Some students may state that there are more jobs for city managers today than there were 50 years ago, since there are both more cities and more cities using city managers.
VII. A Closer Look at the Mayor of Our Town

WHAT?
Students will create a classified advertisement listing all the qualifications and qualities to be found in a capable mayor or city manager for their town or the students will be able to make a collage showing the various roles that Texas mayors play in their job.

WHY?
• To compare places and regions of Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics
• To explain ways in which geographic factors have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas
• To develop an orderly way of categorizing issues and seeing interrelationships among ideas
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the worksheets for each student
- Copies of classified employment ads for students to consult
- Perhaps an overhead example of a classified ad
- Blank typing paper for the ad
- If available, computers or typewriters for the ad
- Black markers
- Old magazines that can be cut up- 3 to 5 per student
- Scissors
- Glue
- Construction paper: one sheet per student or per group

Suggested Teaching Time: 1 to 3 class periods

Suggested Procedures:

1. Have students read the attached sheet, discuss the basic concepts, and complete related worksheets to reinforce the lesson.

2. For the Classified Ad assignment, it would be helpful for many students who are unfamiliar with the contents of a typical newspaper classified employment ad for you to share some examples of complete and less informative samples from the real newspaper. These could be read aloud to the class, reproduced on an overhead, or read in copies of the newspaper examined by the class.

3. For the collage, introduce the idea of showing one’s knowledge using pictures instead of words. If you have had students create collages before, remind them of the qualities of a good collage that convey meaning clearly (neatness, careful cutting, variety in the shape and size of the pictures used, etc.)
   a. Instruct students to show in the collage at least five different official roles that a mayor fulfills for a city.
   b. Have them identify the duties that are shown with brief descriptions on the back
   c. If you wish, have students give the collage a meaningful title.
   d. Provide them with the needed materials and circulate to help students who have a hard time finding pictures or who need clarification about a particular job.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Have the collages displayed in class and have an outside judge (the principal, the mayor, whomever) study the collages to discern the jobs depicted in them. Have students make an outline of their worksheets, highlighting key points. Have the students role-play a day in the life of the Mayor.

Evaluation: The collages can be graded on accuracy, clarity, artistic quality, neatness, and the like. The content of the lesson is easily measured on a test.
The Mayor of Our Town

Every town and city in Texas has a slightly different way of doing just about everything, including running the town government. This description is a one-size-fits-all general, all-purpose description of a mayor. It will probably fit your town fairly well, but you will want to explore some of the specific duties of your mayor that make your town special and different.

The mayor is the political head of your town and he or she is supposed to keep the town moving in a positive direction.

1. Let’s stop here and have you explain in your own words what it means to keep a town moving in a positive direction. (It does NOT mean traveling to the north or south!)

_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

2. How can you tell if a town is moving ahead or is bogged down with problems?

_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

The mayor performs this responsibility in a number of different ways:

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES: Making Laws for Our Town

a. The mayor is a member of the city council and gets to vote on issues, just like all the other city councilmembers do.

b. The mayor presides over the city council, city commission, or board of aldermen meetings. This means that he or she runs council meetings and has the power to decide which councilmembers get to talk and share their ideas. The mayor also has the power to call on other councilmembers who want to make a motion, or suggest an idea to be voted on.

3. Why would this power to call on people to speak in a meeting be important?

_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________________________________

4. Do you think your mayor only calls on people who agree with his or her viewpoint? Explain your thinking.
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

c. The mayor also rules on questions of **procedure**, or the rules about how things get done in the meeting. The mayor’s ruling must be accepted unless a **majority** of the city councilmembers challenge it, or think that it is unfair. This power allows a mayor to decide how to run council meetings.

For example, the mayor can decide to have a vote by a show of hands or a roll call vote. Many mayors prefer that councilmembers raise their hands because it is faster to count. In a close vote, he or she may call for a roll call vote. Or the mayor may ask for a roll call vote on a controversial issue if the mayor wants the public to know how each councilmember voted.

5. Why do you think your mayor might want to know how a vote will turn out before the actual voting in a council meeting? If you were mayor, what could you to do make the vote turn out the way you want it to?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

d. In some Texas cities, the mayor has the power to veto **ordinances** and other things voted on by the city council. This **veto** power allows the mayor to single-handedly undo an ordinance, or local law, that most members of the city council thinks is needed.

6. What would be good about giving one person—the mayor—the power to stop a local law from being put into effect?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

7. Name one problem that could come up in a city in which the mayor has veto power.
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________________________________

APPOINTIVE POWERS: Choosing People to Help Lead Our Town

e. In mayor-council cities in Texas, the mayor has the authority to appoint department heads and advisory board members.
   Each city sets up its departments a little differently. The bigger the city, the larger and more specialized the departments will be. But many cities have, for example, an electric department and a police department. In cities with a mayor-council government, the mayor chooses the person who will be the director of the electric department and the chief of police.

   Advisory boards are groups of townspeople who give advice to the city about how to do something, such as keep water clean or reduce crime in the city. They are citizens, either “ordinary citizens” or citizen experts in the advisory board’s area.

8. Why would some people think it was a bad idea for the mayor alone to have this power to appoint city leaders?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

9. Why would other people think it would be good to have this power held by the mayor alone?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

SIGNATORY POWERS: The Power to Sign Official Paperwork

f. Before anything becomes official in city government, there are always papers, or documents, to be written up, read over, and signed by the mayor.

   For example, the mayor has to sign all city bonds. A bond is a promise to pay back money that a city borrows. A city cannot sell bonds unless the mayor signs all the necessary paperwork.

   The mayor also has the power to sign other contracts, or agreements between the city and a company or person.
   Signing proclamations, or special papers announcing events (City Litter Clean Up Day), or congratulating people for personal achievements (City Clerk Appreciation Day).

CEREMONIAL DUTIES: Going to Ceremonies as the City’s Official Host

g. Almost every day, mayors all over Texas are cutting ribbons as new businesses open, digging up a bit of dirt at ground-breaking ceremonies when a new building is planned, or going to fairs, parades, and other community gatherings.

   Mayors are the officials who often welcome visitors who come to town for meetings and conventions. Sometimes you see mayors giving a special welcome to someone when they hand out the “key to the city.”
Name ___________________________________________________

10. Why would the citizens want their mayor to go to all these celebrations and events?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

11. Why would the mayor want to go to many of these events?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________
Answer Key

1. This means looking to the future, stopping problems before they become serious, planning ways to improve city life, and helping to build a strong economy that can withstand problems.

2. Problems include streets and public facilities in disrepair, discouraged workers, lack of new businesses moving to town, population decrease, especially from people moving out of town, and the like.

3. The mayor gets to decide which ideas are heard and which ideas are not heard at city council meetings.

4. The mayor probably calls on people with all kinds of ideas. If he or she does not, the press will publicize the lack of discussion and disgruntled councilmembers will discuss the issue with the press.

5. The mayor probably polls councilmembers informally before the meetings. He or she probably lobbies members of council to encourage them to vote with the mayor’s ideas.

6. The veto balances the power of the mayor with that of the other members of the council. A veto calls attention to an issue and to the differences of opinion held by the majority of the council and the mayor.

7. The mayor could undo lots of council work and compromises. The council might become discouraged. The ability to reach compromises might be reduced, if the mayor could always threaten to veto an ordinance if he/she were displeased. Also, the council would see the need to lobby the mayor and gain his or her support for key votes.

8. The mayor would be able to appoint his or her friends. It would undermine democracy by giving the mayor too much power.

9. The process of filling the position would be streamlined. The mayor’s choices would be publicized, so it would be unlikely that he or she would be too outrageous. Conflict of interest regulations limit the mayor’s ability to make a completely outrageous appointment.

10. The mayor is the highest town official, so his or her presence adds importance to the event. These types of events are usually festive and up-beat and show the mayor in a favorable light. Such events are a lot more fun for most mayors than other mayoral responsibilities.
WANTED: A MAYOR FOR OUR TOWN

Construct a campaign poster or flier for a fictional Mayor that lists:
1. his or her qualifications for mayor,
2. his or her job responsibilities, and
3. the benefits of the job.

You will be graded on:
1. Completeness (Did you include all requested items?)
2. Factual correctness (Do you have your facts straight?)
3. Correct use of the English language (Do you express yourself clearly and correctly?)
4. Effectiveness of the ad (Is the ad creative and interesting to read?)
VIII. Power, Power: Who’s Got the Power in Our Town?

WHAT?
Students will identify and describe the distribution of power and responsibility among the various figures in local government. This lesson is based on the “Claim Your Power” activity in the Law in a Changing Society materials.

WHY?
• To engage in limited role playing activity
• To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels.
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

Culture:
• Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials needed:
• Information about local government, from the Texas history text, from lecture notes (which you can prepare from the background information for teachers, material printed by the League of Women Voters, or other sources)
• If you wish, copies of the outline page for students to use in taking notes
• Name plates, and “claim” – “do not claim” signs for each of the groups
• Score-keeping materials, if you wish

Suggested Teaching Time: 1 to 2 class periods

Suggested Procedures:
1. Provide students with information about the distribution of power, duties, and responsibilities of various figures in town government. This can be done through students reading and taking notes from a textbook section on the topic, or through students taking notes from your lecture, or a combination of these two ways to impart information. You may wish to focus on your particular town and its unique government, or may prefer a more general overview.

2. Divide the class into groups to represent key town figures and groups:
   - mayor
   - city council (or city commission, or board of aldermen)
   - city manager
   - town departments and employees
   - voters

3. Have each group review its powers, duties, and responsibilities using their collective notes. For students who have only sketchy notes, have other group members help fill in missing details. The object here is for every member of the group to have excellent notes to use to study the material for homework, and in the short term, to use to answer questions in the upcoming class review activity. You will want to circulate among the groups to clarify factual misunderstandings that arise as students try to make sense of their notes, and to give pointers about notetaking and note updating. If your class lacks much notetaking experience, you may wish to use the rough outline below and have students write in their own facts as they read or listen.

4. Give each group a name plate (mayor, city council, etc.) and two hand-held signs reading “claim” and “do not claim.”

5. Then read aloud, one by one, the responsibilities, characteristics, and powers listed below. Have each small group consult with one another (for no more than a minute, and probably only 10 or 20 seconds) and decide if the description you have read applies to them or not.

6. Then ask the correct group to raise their signs, indicating whether they are described in the sentence you have just read. Each group member should be able to point to the place in his or her notes that verifies the group’s vote.

7. Clarify concepts, as needed.

8. Debrief the activity by comparing the scores of the various groups and determining if those scores really represent the relative power held by that person or group in your town.

Follow-Up Possibilities: You may wish to include items from the game that students found difficult, in your warm-ups for the next several days.

Evaluation: This activity is an excellent review activity before a test. You may wish to grade students’ notes, in addition to their participation.
Municipal Government Outline

A. Mayor:
   1. Qualifications _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
   2. Duties _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________

B. City Council
   1. Qualifications _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
   2. Duties _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________

C. City Manager
   1. Qualifications _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
   2. Duties _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________

D. Town Departments and Employees
   1. Qualifications _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
   2. Duties _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________

E. Voters
   1. Qualifications _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
   2. Duties _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
      _________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________________________________

Questions for Municipal Government Groups

In our town, who

a. decides who will be our chief of police?

b. installs parking meters on city streets?

c. decides if the town annexes nearby land to increase the size of our town?

d. signs a petition to make our city council consider building a new airport?

e. is paid to work for our city?

f. decides how much to charge in our town’s parking meters?

g. can veto an ordinance that seems like a bad idea?

h. prepares the budget for our town?

i. removes a councilmember who is doing a bad job?

j. chooses who will speak in a city council meeting discussion about a new housing development?

k. signs a proclamation in honor of a firefighter who saved a family from a burning house?

l. gets to vote at city council meetings?

m. decides if people in our town may put up 15 foot privacy fences?

n. must be 18 years of age to exercise power?

o. buys trees to plant in our parks?

p. tells the city council the advantages and disadvantages of building a new city hall?

q. decides if we build a new city hall?

r. writes up a report on road repairs needed in our town?

s. chooses a new city manager?

t. decides where our town should build a new park?

u. makes sure our city police officers are paid enough money?

v. cuts ribbons at city ceremonies?

w. pays the cost of running our town?
IX. Everyone in Town Likes City Park

**WHAT?**
Students will role-play while planning for the needs of the diverse population of the town.

**WHY?**
- To identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and analyze the consequences of the modifications
- To analyze the effects of the changing population distribution in Texas
- To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- To engage in limited role-playing activity
- To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

*Geography:*
- Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
- Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas
- Understand the characteristics, distribution, and migration of population in Texas

*Economic:*
- Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society

*Government:*
- Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

*Citizenship:*
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
- Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

*Culture:*
- Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

*Social Studies Skills:*
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

*Communicate in written, oral, and visual form*
- Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

*TAAS:*
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:
• Large sheets of newsprint for student sketches
• If you can obtain them, sketch maps of land earmarked for future park development in your own community would be really interesting to use

Suggested Teaching Time: 2 to 5 class periods, or parts of periods
1. Arrange the class into small groups that will act as park planning teams. Give a role to each group member from the choices on the following list, adding and subtracting categories that apply to your municipality. Some groups may have the skills that enable them productively to choose roles themselves; others may need you to assign roles.

Special Needs Planner for Senior Citizens
Special Needs Planner for Persons With Disabilities
Special Needs Planner for Parents and Families
Special Needs Planner for Young People
Special Needs Planner for Athletics and Sports
Special Needs Planner for Wildlife and the Environment
Special Needs Planner for Festivals and Concerts

2. Give each group the assignment of designing a park that provides for the needs of all the groups represented by the special needs planner in their group.
• The most meaningful way of doing this assignment is to use a tract of vacant land near the school as the future site for the park design. Your city parks department may well be able to provide you with a map or sketch of undeveloped park land that you can reproduce for students to use in their planning.
• Perhaps it would be pertinent in your town to redesign an existing park to enhance the features available for the enjoyment of various groups.
• Or you may wish to have students design the parks on imaginary tracts of land a mile square, or some other appropriate size.

3. If possible, invite a city official or planner to visit the class to show a map or blueprint of an existing park.
• Have the speaker describe, or ask students to speculate on the location of features that they may currently take for granted, such as parking lots, swing sets, rest rooms, picnic tables, softball fields, and so forth.
• Have them identify the key natural features of the park and plan for ways to both protect these features and allow townspeople to enjoy them.
• Have students brainstorm about the problems they encounter when visiting a park or parks in general. Have them consider ways that “their” park could solve those problems (dense traffic, worn out grass, litter, lack of lighting, etc.)

4. Have students research the special needs of the groups they each represent, through interviews, newspaper research, and the like.

5. The final group product should include:
• a poster showing a site sketch with features of the park drawn in. This would take the form of an aerial view of the park with key landmarks, vegetation, buildings, and so forth sketched in. The poster should have a title, compass rose, and legend.
• a description of each park feature and its expected capacity (number of swings, number of rest rooms, size of pools, etc.)
• the rationale for including each feature of the park that explains who will benefit from the feature and how its location was selected
• a ranking of the importance of each park feature. Students should figure out what they would do if there were a budget cut and the park could only cost half the amount of money they would spend for their ideal park.
• a plan for funding maintenance and upgrading of the park. Students should consider admission fees, user fees, taxes, sales of park-related merchandise, etc.
• a script for presentation of the planning committee to the city board of park and recreation.
6. Have students present their plans to the class for consideration. It will be important to set a tone of respectful listening about each plan. Have the class comment on the features of each plan that they find interesting or beneficial. You may wish to have students vote on winning parks in categories such as:

- most creative use of space
- most natural park
- most modern, high tech environment
- best blend of features to be enjoyed by all kinds of people
- most expensive to build
- most unusual idea for a park
- most similar to parks we already have
- best park for sports
- best park for little children
- best all around park

- You may wish to have the park plans posted in the room, with ribbons announcing winning designs affixed to them.
- If possible, invite a parks department official to come to class for the presentations of the park plans. Have the guest offer ideas about the parks and about how the process used by the students compares to the process used in the actual town planning.

7. Have the group reflect on how it made the final park plan. Did they all work together and “piggyback” on each other’s ideas? Did they divide up the tasks and then each work alone to devise the plan? Did one person’s ideas predominate? Did they offer suggestions to one another? How did they set priorities for the park? Did they balance competing values when planning for diverse groups? Would everyone in town be able to enjoy the park?

Follow-Up Possibilities: Invite the city planning department to demonstrate how they decide plans for future projects. Sometimes they have several lessons that will teach city planning.

Evaluation: Grade the group projects, assigning both a group grade and an individual grade.
X. Paying the Bills for Running Our Town

**WHAT?**
Students will describe, distinguish, and explain sources of revenue available to municipal government. They will consider ways towns pay for services and capital improvement.

**WHY?**
- To analyze the effects of the changing population distribution in Texas
- To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

**Economic:**
- Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society.

**Government:**
- Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

**Citizenship:**
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
- Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

**Culture:**
- Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

**Social Studies Skills:**
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
- **Communicate in written, oral, and visual form**
  - Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

**TAAS:**
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:
- Chalk board or overhead projector
- Copies of the continuum sheet for each student OR a transparency of that sheet

Suggested Teaching Time: 1 class period

Suggested Procedures:
1. Ask students to write down a definition of “tax” and the things they associate with taxes.
2. Have students share their answers, and then present them with a working definition.
3. Have students generate a list of things that are purchased with tax money. Write the list on the overhead or chalk board. The list will probably include such items as salaries, fire trucks, police uniforms, roads, city buses, street signs and street lights, city hall, furniture, desks, and so forth.
4. Introduce different ways of funding municipal government: Sources of Revenue
5. Ask students to complete the continuums called When is a Tax Fair?. Use the same ways to discuss the ideas that you did earlier in Lesson 2, with the continuum about student opinions on their town. These include bulletin board sharing of opinions or standing up and expressing one’s opinion by the position taken along the line. Allow students to change their minds as facts and interpretations are shared.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Put a transparency on the overhead at the beginning or ending of class that contains the following information. Ask students to tell you what these three sources of money are and define each.

The Biggest Sources of Money for Texas City Governments

F_____ 
T_____ 
B_____

Evaluation: Test the ability of students to distinguish among these sources of revenue.
The Biggest Sources of Money for Texas City Governments

1. Fees
   - **Utility Revenues:** People who use city utilities pay for them. Utilities include water and wastewater systems, and in some cities, city electricity or gas systems. Residents pay for utilities in their houses and apartments, and business owners pay for utilities for their stores and offices. These fees are collected each month.
   - **User Fees:** Many cities charge money for people who use city facilities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, and airports. People usually pay the user fee at the time they use the facility.

2. Taxes
   - **Property tax:** Everyone who owns certain kinds of property pays taxes on the value of that property, such as land, homes, buildings, office equipment, etc. The value of the property is set by an appraiser. Property owners pay their taxes once each year for as long as they own the property. People who own more taxable things, who are usually wealthier, pay more in taxes.
   - **Sales Tax Revenue:** Everyone who buys things in a city pays the same set percentage of every dollar in taxes. Rich people and poor people are taxed at the same rate. This rate can be changed by a vote of a city council.

3. Bonds: Borrowing Needed Money
   Most cities in Texas pay the usual costs of running the city out of the taxes and fees listed above. Still, there are times when cities face huge expenses, such as building a new town hall or new water lines, or expanding road systems or city bus lines. When Texas towns and cities need large amounts of money for such large special projects, they usually borrow money by selling bonds. People all over the nation have a chance to invest in Texas city bonds.

   When cities sell bonds, they must pay interest to the buyers of the bonds, just as consumers pay interest when they take out a loan. A town secures the loan by promising to pay lenders back with money collected from taxes, fees, and other city income. Often a city has to raise its tax rate to be able to pay the cost of interest on the sale of bonds. Cities must often get the approval of voters before they can go to the expense of selling bonds and paying interest. When voter approval is needed, the city holds a bond election. When most voters think the things that the city will do with the money will help the city, voters approve the sale of bonds. Sometimes bond elections fail because citizens are afraid that the extra taxes will hurt their households, or think that the money will not be used for important projects.

   Each city has its own bond rating, which is a way of telling potential lenders how risky it is for them to lend money to a city. Cities that seem the most likely to repay a loan usually get the highest bond rating (AAA or Aaa) and a lower interest rate. Cities that seem more likely to have problems repaying loans must offer more money in interest to be able to attract investors. These cities have a lower bond rating (BBB or Baa).

Other Sources of Money for City Governments

- **Federal Grants:** Our federal government gives money to cities to help them accomplish certain goals. Texas cities use federal funds to build low cost housing for poor persons, for example. These funds usually go to needy cities; wealthier cities usually do not get many federal funds. This money is similar to a gift to be used for a special purpose and does not usually have to be paid back.
- **Fines:** Cities may fine people and businesses that break laws having to do with fire safety, health, zoning, and traffic laws. People and companies that violate the laws pay these fines.
- **License Fees:** City governments do many things to help keep cities safe, healthy, and pleasant places to live. Cities may charge fees to cover their activities in these areas. For example, cities may charge inspection fees to check out the wiring in buildings. A city may charge registration fees for pets, and licensing fees for jobs such as electricians. People who will directly benefit from the inspections and licenses pay these costs.
- **Street Taxes:** Companies and businesses that use city streets pay “franchise taxes.” Taxicab companies, cable television companies, and utilities companies pay these fees.
- **Hotel taxes:** People who stay in hotels and motels pay a tax that is a percentage of the cost of the room. The money from this tax goes to pay for visitor services, the preservation of historic buildings, and cultural and arts activities. These taxes are mostly paid by people visiting the city.
- **Alcoholic Beverage Taxes:** Liquor stores, clubs and restaurants that serve alcoholic drinks, and brewers have to pay these taxes to the state. The state then pays part of the fees back to the cities where these businesses are located. These taxes are paid by consumers of alcohol.
- **Occupation Taxes:** Companies and people that run coin-operated machines, such as pinball machines, pay city taxes on their businesses.
When is a tax fair?

Place an X on each continuum line.
There are no right or wrong answers, so put what you really think.

1. Everyone who lives in a town should pay taxes, rich and poor alike.

   Strongly agree ___________________________ Strongly disagree ___________________________

   __________________________________________

2. Only the people who use a facility or service should have to pay for it.

   Strongly agree ___________________________ Strongly disagree ___________________________

   __________________________________________

3. Rich people should have to pay a higher tax rate than poor people.

   Strongly agree ___________________________ Strongly disagree ___________________________

   __________________________________________

4. Taxes should be abolished.

   Strongly agree ___________________________ Strongly disagree ___________________________

   __________________________________________

5. City councils should be able to sell bonds whenever the city needs money.

   Strongly agree ___________________________ Strongly disagree ___________________________

   __________________________________________

6. It is better to have a high sales tax than high property taxes.

   Strongly agree ___________________________ Strongly disagree ___________________________

   __________________________________________

7. Of all the ways to raise money for a town, which one seems the best to you? Which way seems the worst to you? Consider ways that towns now raise money and ways that towns could use the money to fund their projects.
XI. City Council in Action: Balancing Needs in Our Town

WHAT?
Students will role play decisions, representing different viewpoints held in town about controversial issues.

WHY?
• To analyze the effects of the changing population distribution in Texas
• To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
• To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
• To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Geography:
• Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
• Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

Economic:
• Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
• Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

Culture:
• Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form:
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:
- For each member of a group, a copy of the situation card that applies to the that group’s dilemma

Suggested Teaching Time: A total of 5 to 7 class periods, spread out, if you prefer, over the course of several weeks. This stretching out of the unit allows students to do research on their own time, and allows you to continue with the unit during the intervening days.

Suggested Procedures:
1. Divide the class into groups, each of which will select a dilemma from those presented, or who can create their own scenario to correspond with an issue they know about, but which has not yet been resolved in real life. (The more students have to create their own responses to the situation, the better.)
2. Give the group planning time to:
   - figure out how they will role play the dilemma in class
   - gather facts to use in fleshing out the roles in each dilemma
   - decide how they will resolve the issue for their imagined community
   - rehearse their role play
3. Have the groups present their role plays to class. If you wish to invite community members to observe, that might lend a more serious tone to the skits. (Or it may inhibit students—you decide.)
4. Evaluate the skits in class, asking students to share their feelings about:
   - what a given group did well
   - how well the group had researched their topic
   - how realistically the community members and politicians in the skit were portrayed
   - how thoughtfully the group analyzed the issues in the case
   - how practical and beneficial to the community the group’s final resolution of the dilemma was

Follow-Up Possibilities: Invite a member of the city council or the city staff, an interest group or a community activist to class to discuss how such problems are resolved in real life.

Evaluation: Students could complete a self-evaluation of their role in the group and their satisfaction with the final product presented to class.
A. Our Ailing City Hospital: What’s the Cure?

Our town’s hospital was built near the hustle and bustle of downtown in the late 1940s, not long after World War II ended and all the veterans returned home. It was then a gleaming, modern facility, the best in the region. But today the hospital building is 50 years old, and it shows its age in some places, even with good repairs and maintenance. It is difficult to find room in the hospital for new medical machines that are so important in giving patients the very best care. The City Council must decide what to do with the city hospital to be able to meet the health needs of our community. Here are the points of view of persons closely involved with the issue.

- Dr. Valdez, the hospital director, believes that the hospital will need to have all new electrical wiring within the next five years to be able to keep all the computers and medical equipment running. The roof was replaced just two years ago, but is already leaking in several places. He reports that the hospital has a hard time recruiting doctors and nurses, because they would rather work in a newer, better equipped hospital.

- Ms. Chapman, the director of hospital volunteers, is worried that she is having a hard time recruiting new volunteers. Many volunteers are retired persons who do not want to volunteer downtown, where they have a hard time finding a parking space and have to pay a parking meter. In addition, there have been several break-ins in cars parked downtown.

- Dr. White, the head of radiology, wants the hospital to buy a new scanning machine (like an x-ray) that costs over a million dollars. There is no place in the hospital to put the machine now. But if the hospital does not buy this new scanner, patients will have to travel over 75 miles to have scans made. Dr. White fears that our town hospital will lose money if patients leave to seek better medical care.

- Dr. Cohen, the head of the surgery department, believes the town would be better off building a brand new hospital in the suburbs. He feels people want a newer facility that would be able to offer more kinds of treatment. He believes that a private company will build a hospital if the city does not replace its current old building. This other hospital could draw patients away from the city hospital.

What should the City Council do? As you think about the problem, consider these issues:

1. How would it help our town to fix up the hospital, build a new one, or do nothing? Who would benefit most from each choice?
2. What challenges or problems would we face if we fix up the hospital, build a new hospital, or do nothing? Who would be hurt by this decision?
3. What are the costs of fixing up or expanding the hospital, building a new hospital, and doing nothing?
4. What steps should we go through to make our decision? Whose opinion should we ask? How long do we have to make our decision?
5. If I had to vote as a City Council member today, which way would I vote? WHY?
B. Do we need more street lights in our neighborhoods?

For many years our town has had street lights in the downtown area. These lights were installed to help people as they walked to and from downtown offices, stores, movie theaters, and restaurants after dark. Many people, including Mr. Herrera, believe that street lights protect nighttime pedestrians from crimes such as muggings and purse snatchings. Businesses in lighted areas, such as Dr. Miller’s medical office and Ms. Stein’s dress shop, report fewer nighttime break-ins and burglaries since the lights were installed. Also, police department studies have shown that nighttime drivers in lighted areas have fewer accidents than drivers on dark streets.

Because of these advantages of outdoor lighting, many residents of our town want to add street lights to residential neighborhoods. Other residents, like Ms. Hannah, feel that the lights are unnecessary and unpleasant additions to the neighborhood. She and other residents like to take evening walks and complain that they cannot see the stars and moon as well because of street lights. Others, including Mr. Ching and Mr. Stone, are concerned about the expense of buying the street lights and paying for the electric power needed to run them. Some parents and teachers are concerned that young people will gather under the street lights at night when they should be at home.

What should our city do?

1. What are the benefits of adding street lights in the neighborhoods? Think of other ideas besides those mentioned above.
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems — of adding these lights? How could the town pay for the cost?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of adding street lights? What would be good and bad about asking for people’s opinions?
4. What could happen when some people do not get their way on this issue? Are the possible results serious problems?
5. If you had to vote on this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?
C. Do we want a new factory in our town?

For many years our town has been a medium sized town near a large urban area. Some families, like the Serranos, own some land near town on which they farm and keep stock. Other families have stores and small businesses, such as Thornberry’s Market and Olivia’s Tailor Shop. Other families, like the Mikeskas and the Garretts, earn their living working at schools and the field offices of state agencies, such as the highway department and DPS.

Recently officials from the Disposable Dinnerware Corporation came to our town to talk to landowners about selling their pasture land to the company. This company wants to build a factory on land that is now used for farming. They are willing to pay the landowners well for the land, which is less expensive than land in urban areas.

The officials also met with the City Council to discuss their plans for a factory in our town. The factory would make Styrofoam hot drink cups, Styrofoam ice chests, and Styrofoam containers for fast food sandwiches. The company believes our town has the water, workers, and tax rate that would let the company profit from a factory here. The company believes that the highways near our town would make transporting the factory products easy. The company expects to provide jobs for 200 skilled and semi-skilled workers.

What should our City Council do?
1. What are the benefits of having a new factory in our town? Think of as many possible benefits as you can.
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems— of having this factory here? What would be some “hidden” costs that we might not notice at first?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of this new factory? What would be good and bad about asking for people’s opinions?
4. What additional information do we need before we can make a decision?
5. If you had to vote on this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?
D. A Halfway House in Our Town?

Almost everyone in our town is concerned about the rise in crime in Texas cities. The newspaper has been running a series of stories about prison overcrowding in East Texas prisons. The state is trying out a number of ideas to handle the large number of convicted criminals now crowding the prisons. One of these ideas is to start halfway houses for convicts on parole. These facilities would have space for 10 to 15 convicted felons who have served some part of their prison term with good behavior.

These persons must agree to follow strict rules of parole in order to be admitted to the halfway house program. For example, they must hold a job or be actively looking for one. They must not use alcohol or illegal drugs. If they stay out past curfew or leave the city without permission from their parole officer, they will return to prison. They will also be returned to prison if they are found to have committed another crime.

The community is split in their opinions about the halfway house. Some residents, especially elderly persons who live alone, like Ms. Bell and Ms. Guffy, are afraid of having convicted criminals living in their neighborhoods. Their neighbors, the Lloyds, want to give the convicts a second chance. Others, like the Rodriguez family, think that halfway houses are better than prisons and they do not want to pay for the higher cost of running more prisons.

The state government will soon be deciding where to locate the halfway houses. What position should our town take on the issue?

1. What are the benefits of having convicts in halfway houses instead of prisons? What benefits would come to our town from a halfway house?
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems — of having the halfway house in our town?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of starting half-way houses? What would be good and bad about asking for people's opinions?
4. What can our City Council do to help avoid serious problems from arising over this issue?
5. If the City Council had the power to decide this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?
E. Teen Curfew: Will it Help Our Town?

Some people in our town, like Mr. Lambert, are concerned that young teenagers are staying out too late at night. Some teens tend to loiter in small groups outside town businesses, openly consuming alcohol, and then driving their cars too fast. These and other teens have gotten into mischief and criminal activities after dark. Some citizens believe that these young people are at risk for dropping out of school and want all young people to be indoors at night. A group of concerned parents and business owners led by Ms. Richards and Ms. Leopold, has recommended a teen curfew that would be enforced by the city police department. These persons want young people to be off the streets between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM. They have noticed that graffiti artists seem to do their painting at night, and it is causing their businesses extra expense to clean up the graffiti. Captain Hayes of the police department feels his job will be easier if he does not have to worry as much about teenagers being out on the street after dark.

Some people, like Mr. Reagan, are not happy with the suggestion of a curfew. They do not want a restriction on all teenagers’ activities, which can include working, going to concerts and movies, and being out late with their friends on a weekend night. They feel that it is a mistake to treat all teens as if they are troublemakers. In addition, Captain Martinez of the police department is worried that it will be difficult and expensive to enforce the curfew ordinance.

1. What are the benefits of having a curfew for teenagers?
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems — of having a curfew?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of the curfew?
   Should the council get their ideas, or just vote on the proposed curfew?
4. What can our City Council do to help avoid serious problems from arising over this issue?
5. If the City Council had the power to decide this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?
F. Widening Main Street: Great idea or a huge mistake?

There is no doubt about it: traffic is heavy on Main Street. Cars get backed up for blocks sometimes waiting behind a person trying to make a left turn. Parking spaces along the street are scarce, so people block the right lane sometimes while they are waiting for a car to pull out of a parking spot. City buses, too, can slow things down while they wait for passengers to get on or off the bus. Even without a traffic accident slowing up traffic, it can really be a slow drive down Main Street some days. The problem is especially bad at evening rush hour.

Citizens are divided about what to do. One group of commuters, headed up by Mr. Chote are fed up with all the traffic jams. They want parking spaces removed from the street so that there is always at least one extra lane of traffic. They also believe that a middle left turn lane needs to be added to cut down on waiting time.

Other citizens led by Mr. and Mrs. Chavez want to use part of the wide sidewalks on Main Street to make another lane of traffic. They argue that no one really uses the park benches along Main Street anymore and the space would be better used to ease the traffic problems.

Ms. Greenstein represents the environmental group that is against the loss of trees along Main Street. If the sidewalk is made narrow, 12 lovely old trees will have to be cut down. Also, the small grassy areas for park benches in each of the ten main blocks will have to be removed and paved over. The environmentalists believe that the loss of plants along the street will result in more air and noise pollution and will raise the downtown temperature in the summer.

Main Street merchants are not sure they want the street to have more lanes for traffic. Mr. Groves who owns a store on the street, says stores will lose business because there will be no space to park near the store. Customers will have to park at least two blocks away, and in the heat of the summer or on a rainy day, customers just won’t stand for that. At all times of the year, it will be more convenient and pleasant for people to drive right past Main Street stores and on to the mall.

1. What are the benefits of making Main Street wider?
2. What would be the disadvantages of widening the street?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea? Should the council get their ideas, or just vote on the proposed widening?
4. What can our City Council do to help avoid serious problems from arising over this issue?
5. If the City Council had the power to decide this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?
G. Pasture Land, Greenbelt, or Meadowlake Village: What does our town need?

Several home builders in our town have approached the city zoning commission to get permission to build housing developments on 300 acres of land three miles west of downtown. They have chosen the name Meadowlake Village for their planned development. This land was once the Barnes family farm. After Mr. Barnes died, the land passed to his daughter who lives out of town. She leases the pastures to two families who graze cattle on the land. Ms. Barnes has never liked the area and says she will never live on the land herself. Taxes on the land have recently gone up, so that she really is not making much money from renting out the land. Ms. Barnes is now considering selling the land to developers.

Her tenants, Mr. Frank and Mr. Escobedo, are not excited about the possibility of losing the pasture land they now rent. They know that it can be difficult and expensive to find good quality land. They have seen too many good pastures become suburban developments, and are afraid their grazing land will soon be covered with homes.

The developers, headed up by Mr. Carpenter, are very interested in her offer to sell. Good land close in to town is getting harder to find. To have a tract of land large enough for a good-sized housing development is very attractive to the developers. If their project is approved, the development will provide jobs for many construction workers and bring business to the building supply companies in town.

The Ecology Society is not in favor of the development being approved. Their president, Mr. Preston, states that the development will endanger the species of black throated song bird that inhabits the farm. The society is also afraid that the wastewater from the proposed development will harm fish in Williams Creek. Also, they are against the installation of driveways and sidewalks that they say will increase runoff into the creek after rains.

1. What are the benefits of having a new housing development in our town?
2. What would be the costs of building the new development?
3. How should the potential environmental impact of the development be measured?
4. What can the zoning commission do to be sure that it does not make a decision it will regret at some time in the future?
5. If you served on the zoning commission and the commission was going to vote on the issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?
XII. Working in Jobs that Help Make Our Town Better

WHAT?
Students will research and gather information about the many departments and job opportunities available in city government. They will apply the information by participating in a career fair and presenting their research in a creative way.

WHY?
- To analyze the effects of the changing population distribution in Texas
- To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
- To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Geography:
- Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
- Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

Economic:
- Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
- Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world

Government:
- Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
- Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
- Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

Culture:
- Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

Social Studies Skills:
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
- Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials needed:
• Copies of the lesson hand-out for each student
• List of municipal government jobs in your town

Suggested teaching time: 20 to 50 minutes

Suggested Procedures:
1. Introduce the concept of jobs in city government. If your town is smaller, students may not be as aware of the job possibilities because they do not come in contact with the many departments described in this lesson.
2. Give students the worksheet and allow them time to complete it.
3. Have students pair up to compare answers
4. Have students choose one job title on the list at the end of the lesson.
5. Have students research and gather information through interviews to prepare an oral and visual presentation about their specific job.
6. Students will set up their presentations and invite other classes to their career fair about city government.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Invite a guest speaker from a city department to describe his or her perspective on the municipal process. Have students visit a city council meeting and report on it. Invite a panel of persons from different areas of city government to discuss the similarities and differences of their perspectives. Students may wish to write a letter to a city department in which they are interested to inquire about training requirements for various jobs.

Evaluation: Grade the assignment according to completeness and sincerity of effort.
Careers in Municipal Government

You probably already know a lot about city workers in your town. You may see them working on the way to school each day. Someone in your family may work in your town’s government. You probably hear about city departments on the news.

You may not know as much about the departments in a municipality and what these departments do. Read the short description of each department below and think of one kind of job that could be done in that department by an employee of the city. Write the name of the job under the department that could use a person with those skills. Some suggested jobs are listed at the end, but you may think up other jobs on your own. Please do not use any one job in more than one department. For example, almost every department needs a typist and a manager. Try to use more specific jobs.

Remember to write down the job title of a city government employee. For example, for #1, you might want to put “pilot.” Pilots do work at airports, but they work for airline companies, not the city. Think carefully about your answers.

1. City Aviation Department: runs our town airport
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

2. City Police Department: keeps order in our town, investigates crimes
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

3. Fire Department: works to prevent, put out, and find the causes of fires
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

4. Emergency Medical Services: provides ambulance service and first aid training
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

5. City Parks and Recreation Department: operates and maintains city parks
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

6. City Hospital: provides emergency and other hospital care to persons who need it, including persons without health insurance
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

7. City Cemetery: allows burial of any residents, even those who cannot afford a plot
   Job: ______________________________________________________________

8. City Convention Center: holds meetings and conventions for groups
   Job: ______________________________________________________________
9. Municipal Court: judges cases of persons accused of breaking city ordinances, including traffic violations
   Job: 

10. City Fine Arts Center: offers art classes, exhibits, plays, and concerts
    Job: 

11. City Utility Department: provides electrical and water service to residents
    Job: 

12. City Environmental and Conservation Department: looks after air and water pollution, organizes garbage collection, sponsors recycling programs, and energy conservation
    Job: 

13. City Health Clinics: offer basic medical care and shots to residents who cannot afford to pay for their medical care
    Job: 

14. City Health and Human Services Department: runs housing programs, child care services, and services to elderly persons
    Job: 

15. City Inspections Department: inspects buildings, restaurants, and swimming pools to make sure they are safe and healthy
    Job: 

16. City Library: provides books, magazines, videos, tapes, and newspapers for reference and check out, and sponsors reading programs
    Job: 

17. Municipal Public Works Department: designs, builds, and maintains streets and buildings for city government use
    Job: 

18. City Purchasing Department: takes bids on products that the city will buy and on projects that the city will build, orders and distributes all supplies needed by departments
    Job: 

19. City Planning Office: studies information, notices trends, sets goals and makes plans for changes the city will face in years to come
    Job: 

Name ________________________________________________

20. Municipal Public Information Office: prepares publications such as pamphlets, organizes plans to inform the public of information the city government wants people to know

    Job: ______________________________________________________________

accountant
air traffic controller
architect
artist
backhoe operator
biologist
cashier
city manager
chemist
computer operator
computer programmer
construction worker
cook
custodian
electrician
engineer
finger print expert
first aid instructor
food service worker
gardener
historian
judge
laboratory technician
lawyer
librarian
lifeguard
mechanic
medical technician
meter reader
musician
nurse
park ranger
photographer
planner
plumber
printer
psychologist
roofer
social worker
switchboard operator
trash collector
truck driver
undercover officer
video photographer
waiter
writer
Answer Key:

Possible answers, and there will no doubt be others that students choose:

1. **City Aviation Department**: air traffic controller, electrician, engineer, gardener

2. **City Police Department**: artist, biologist, chemist, computer programmer, fingerprint expert, first aid instructor, lab technician, lawyer, librarian, mechanic, park ranger, photographer, planner, social worker, switchboard operator, undercover officer, video photographer, writer

3. **Fire Department**: architect, chemist, electrician, engineer, first aid instructor, photographer, planner, switchboard operator, truck driver

4. **Emergency Medical Services**: medical technician, first aid instructor, lawyer, mechanic, nurse, switchboard operator

5. **City Parks and Recreation Department**: accountant, architect, backhoe operator, construction worker, custodian, food service worker, gardener, lifeguard, mechanic, park ranger, planner, printer, trash collector, truck driver, waiter

6. **City Hospital**: accountant, architect, cashier, chemist, cook, custodian, first aid instructor, gardener, lab technician, medical technician, nurse, planner, plumber, printer, psychologist, social worker, switchboard operator, waiter

7. **City Cemetery**: backhoe operator, construction worker, gardener

8. **City Convention Center**: accountant, cashier, custodian, electrician, food service worker, gardener, planner, waiter

9. **Municipal Court**: cashier, custodian, food service worker, judge, lawyer, librarian, switchboard operator

10. **City Fine Arts Center**: artist, cashier, custodian, food service worker, gardener, librarian, musician, printer, video photographer, writer

11. **City Utility Department**: accountant, biologist, cashier, computer programmer, construction worker, custodian, electrician, engineer, lawyer, mechanic, meter reader, planner, writer

12. **City Environmental and Conservation Department**: architect, biologist, chemist, custodian, engineer, gardener, lawyer, photographer, planner, trash collector, writer

13. **City Health Clinics**: accountants, custodian, first aid instructor, lab technician, medical technician, nurse, planner, psychologist, social worker

14. **City Human Services Department**: accountant, architect, cashier, custodian, electrician, engineer, librarian, nurse, planner, plumber, psychologist, roofer, social worker

15. **City Inspections Department**: electrician, engineer, plumber, roofer, writer

16. **City Library**: cashier, custodian, gardener, historian, librarian, video photographer, writer

17. **Municipal Public Works Department**: accountant, architect, backhoe operator, construction worker, electrician, engineer, lawyer, photographer, planner, truck driver

18. **City Purchasing Department**: accountant, cashier, computer programmer

19. **City Planning Office**: architect, engineer, historian, librarian, photographer, planner, writer

20. **Municipal Public Information Office**: artist, computer programmer, lawyer, librarian, photographer, printer, writer
XIII. Checking out Town Documents: The Charter and the Budget

WHAT?
Students will examine city documents using primary source material and electronic technology.

WHY?
• To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
• To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
• To analyze the economic impact on the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Geography:
• Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
• Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

Economic:
• Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
• Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 7: Interpret Social Studies Data
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials needed:
• A class set of each of the city documents (or pertinent excerpt from your own city’s charter and budget)
• Copies of the question sheets for each student or group
• Dictionaries may be helpful to some students

Suggested Teaching Time: 45-50 minutes

Suggested Procedures:
1. Hand out the first document and read it aloud to the class. Then direct students to answer the questions about the document’s contents.
2. You may wish to divide the class into groups of three or four students examining the documents and discussing the questions.
3. Go over the answers in class and clarify difficult points.
4. Ask students to reflect upon how they determined the meanings of difficult words from context.
5. If time permits, hand out the budget materials and go through the same procedure.
6. Allow students to access city web sites on the Internet to discover what other city charters include.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Ask students to look for key words from the readings in newspaper articles. Have them bring such items to class for discussion. Have students create their own city budget, prioritizing parks, police, etc.

Evaluation: A completion grade can be taken on the document questions.

Need a copy of the Austin City charter included for this lesson.
One City’s Municipal Charter

Read over the passage below from the City of Austin Charter. Then answer the questions below.

1. A magistrate is a ______
   a.) mayor
   b.) council
   c.) disabled person
   d.) judge

2. How long is a magistrate’s term in Austin? __________________

3. How does a magistrate get the job? ______
   a.) from city council appointment
   b.) from the state constitution
   c.) from the State of Texas

4. If a person wants to become a magistrate, name one thing that person should do.
   __________________________________________________________________________

5. When would a magistrate be removed from office?
   a.) on January 1st of an even-numbered year
   b.) when he or she became disabled
   c.) when he or she is admitted to practicing law
   d.) after serving for two years

6. Why does the charter probably require a magistrate to have lived in the city for 2 years before the appointment?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

7. The best title for this section of the city charter might be:
   a.) How You Can Become a Magistrate in Austin
   b.) How the Austin City Council Chooses a Magistrate
   c.) How the Austin Municipal Court Operates
   d.) Qualifications for a Magistrate in Austin

8. The hardest part of this passage for me to understand was the phrase
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

9. This was confusing to me because ________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

10. What would be another method the City of Austin could have used to choose municipal judges?
    Would this be better for the city, in your opinion? Explain.
    __________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________
Answer Key: One City’s Municipal Charter

1. d.) judge

2. 2 years

3. a.) from city council appointment

4. A person who wants to become a magistrate should become a lawyer, practice for at least two years, live inside the city limits, and make his or her ambitions known to city councilmembers.

5. b.) when he or she became disabled

6. The charter authors probably thought that a person who lived in Austin would be the best judge of persons accused of violating Austin ordinances. They are presumably familiar with the people, the norms, and the values of citizens.

7. d.) Qualifications for a Magistrate in Austin

10. Judges could be elected, or appointed by the mayor.
Checking out a Town Budget

A city budget is a way a city states what is most important and needed for that city in a particular year. The budget is a listing of all the activities, programs, and things the city plans to buy that year. In writing the budget, the city council sets priorities, which means the city council decides what programs are essential, important, and not so important to citizens. The money spent through the budget can be used to help the town government solve problems. The money spent by the city can encourage economic growth. Just about everyone in town has a different idea about what is the most important part of city government to fund.

The budget also contains a list of the city’s expected sources of income. The city needs to have a fairly good idea of how much money it will take in that year, before it knows how well it can fund city programs. During the budget process, persons in town who feel they pay too many taxes often encourage councilmembers to cut back on city government spending.

Since the process of deciding the budget is so important, then, it is usually closely watched by people who will be affected by it. During budget time, many people lobby councilmembers to be sure that funding is set aside for programs they think are important. In lobbying, people share information with the council to try to persuade them to vote a certain way. Lobbyists and interested persons may give speeches to city council, write letters, meet with councilmembers, invite councilmembers to parties or other events, and so forth.

Each town uses a slightly different way of writing and agreeing upon the budget, though there are some basic requirements by state law. In writing the budget, the city manager (in a council-manager city) or mayor (in a mayor-council city), with lots of help from staff members, writes up a proposed budget. In a city the size of Austin, the budget takes up hundreds of pages in several volumes. For a smaller city, with fewer programs and a smaller amount of money to spend, the budget may be much shorter.

Budget workers refer to the budgets of earlier years to see what has been done before. They ask each city department to state its goals and needs for funding. The city staff and councilmembers may hold working sessions in which they exchange ideas about the needs and the future of the city. Councilmembers need to understand the needs of citizens and city departments before they vote on the final budget.

Copies of the proposed budget are also printed and made available to residents. A public hearing, or meeting, must be held before the budget is voted on by the council, and this hearing must be announced in the town newspaper. At this hearing, any resident who wishes to comment on the budget has a chance to speak. In some cities, a number of public hearings may be held in different parts of town, so that everyone feels included in the process. The people involved in approving the budget have to make a number of compromises along the way to the final budget.

1. Read the material below, which is an overview sheet listing the total amounts spent by the city of Austin in its 1993-1994 capital budget. It is just one of hundreds of pages of budget information prepared for the city government for 1993-94. This sheet lists the total amounts of money the city spent for each department on major items that would be expected to last several years or more.

2. Then answer the questions on the following pages.

Name _____________________________________________ Teacher _________________________________________
A Piece of One City’s Budget

1. Which budget category received the largest funding that year? ________________________________

2. How much funding did that category receive? ________________________________

3. Think about what this department’s expenses might include. What might account for this large amount of spending by this department?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4. About what fraction of the total capital budget will go to this department?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. Imagine that you felt funding for another department was more important than for this department mentioned above. Imagine you wanted to prove that the program you care about is being underfunded. What is one piece of information you could use to prove your case?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Now look at the budget sheet from the Electric Utility Department, also of the City of Austin. This sheet is used to explain the department’s job and other information that the readers of the budget should know.

1. What is the job of the electric utility department? Explain using your own words.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2. Name two kinds of power plants that the city uses to produce electric power.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. The total generating capacity of these power plants is______ megawatts.

4. The highest requirement for power used at one time was ____ megawatts.

5. How many “spare” megawatts of generating power did the city have? ________
Name ___________________________________________________

6. The city has the power to make more electricity than it uses. Is this a waste of money and resources? Explain your thinking.
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

7. What trend do the numbers in the chart show about the number of electric utility customers in Austin?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

8. What pattern does the chart describe in the amount of power that can be produced by the power plants (generating capacity)?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

9. If you managed the electric utility department, what do you think you might want to spend money on in the future?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

10. What are two different ways you could use to achieve your goal?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

11. How did you find reading this budget? Was anything confusing to you? What additional information would help you understand better?
## Capital Budget - 1993-94

1993-94 Approved Capital Budget

### General Government

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental and Conservation Services (open space)</td>
<td>$711,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental and Conservation Services - Efficiency Improvements</td>
<td>$326,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>$1,272,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Government</td>
<td>$575,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Services</td>
<td>$11,625,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>$122,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>$661,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>$5,210,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Development</td>
<td>$900,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>$1,250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works and Transportation</td>
<td>$20,390,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** $43,044,511

Source: City Manager’s Approved 1993-94 Budget. City of Austin, TX
**Electric Utility - 1993-94**

**Department Services**

The Electric Utility Department meets the demand for electric utility service to customers within the service area certified by the State of Texas by providing an adequate amount of electric energy to meet the customers’ instantaneous needs for electricity and by maintaining electric utility service at adequate levels of quality and reliability.

The City of Austin owns three gas/oil-fueled electric generation facilities, a photovoltaic plant, and a gas turbine generating station, and it jointly participates with other utilities in the ownership of coal-fueled and nuclear-powered generation facilities. Total current generating capacity is 2,420.3 megawatts. The system's highest capacity peak-load requirement of 1,581 megawatts occurred in July and August 1993.

The proposed budget achieves the goal of no increase in electric rates in 1993-94. Because of uncertainties associated with the South Texas Project and the Holly Power Plant, additional information or decisions pertaining to these plants could necessitate a rate change in 1993-94.

**ELECTRIC UTILITY INDICATORS**

Since 1987-88:
- Average customer cost/kilowatt-hour: Down 8%
- Number of customers: Up 14%
- Kilowatt-hour sales: Up 19%
- Generating capacity: Up 4%
- Inflation: Up 27%
- Staffing: Up 11%

**SALES, REVENUE AND PERSONNEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Amended</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>$448,864,604</td>
<td>$498,830,422</td>
<td>$497,337,429</td>
<td>$459,269,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements</td>
<td>$462,082,428</td>
<td>$499,606,674</td>
<td>$499,007,494</td>
<td>$460,097,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</td>
<td>1,103.00</td>
<td>1,210.50</td>
<td>1,210.50</td>
<td>1,275.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_City of Austin_
ARTICLE VI

Municipal Court

Section 1

MUNICIPAL COURT

As amended at election of April 7, 1973.

There shall be a court known as The Municipal Court of The City of Austin, with such jurisdiction, powers, and duties as are given and prescribed by the laws of the State of Texas.

Section 2

JUDGE OF THE MUNICIPAL COURT

As amended at election of April 7, 1973.

The municipal court shall be presided over by a magistrate who shall be known as the judge of the municipal court. He shall be appointed by the Council for a two-year term beginning on January 1st of even numbered years. He shall be removed only for cause of disability as defined in the State Constitution. He shall have been admitted to practice law in the State of Texas for not less than two years and shall have resided in the city for a period of not less than two years immediately preceding his appointment.

In the event the judge of the municipal court is unable to act for any reason, the Council shall appoint an attorney possessing the qualifications required above to act in his place. The judge, or anyone acting in his place, shall receive such compensation as may be set by the Council.

The Council shall have the power to create and establish additional municipal courts, and to appoint more than one judge of each municipal court, whether one or more, each of whom shall be a magistrate and shall have the qualifications and serve the term of office prescribed in the first paragraph of this section.
Answer Key

1. Public works and transportation
2. $20,390,000
3. The department probably built structures or roads, purchased buses, or other major items.
4. almost half
5. documents showing the number of persons who use various department’s facilities, a calculation of the return on investment for the two programs, the budget figures for all city departments, the mission statements of the departments

Now look at the budget sheet from the Electric Utility Department.

1. to provide electric power so that residents can turn on switches at any time and have the electricity they want provided right then
2. gas/oil fueled electric generation plant, photovoltaic plant, gas turbine generating station, and coal fueled and nuclear powered generation facilities
3. The total generating capacity of these power plants is 2,420.3 megawatts.
4. The highest requirement for power used at one time was 1,581 megawatts.
5. 839.3
6. This is probably necessary. If one plant has a problem, the city still has plenty of power. The city has the ability to generate enough power for new customers who may come along in future years. It takes a long time to build a power plant, so it is good that the city has some margin of unused power.
7. the number of customers is up 14%
8. generating capacity is up 4%
9. programs encouraging conservation of power, use of solar power and other alternative energy sources, perhaps planning for a new power plant, among other things
10. ads on television and radio, rebates to customers who use less power or who install conservation measures, studying other cities’ utility programs for new ideas, drawing up plans
XIV. Face to Face with a Town Official

WHAT?
Students will participate in a guest speaker presentation, job shadowing program, or a career fair where city officials explain their job responsibilities and duties.

WHY?
• To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
• To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
• To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Geography:
• Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
• Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

Economic:
• Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
• Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
How?

Suggestions for the best use of guest speakers with your students.

1. Do not be shy! City officials will probably jump at the chance to meet with your students. Your students will look forward to the chance to meet a real government official, some because they think they are getting out of “real” work, but most of them because they are having a rare and important chance to learn firsthand about a subject.

2. Be sure to notify your principal that you plan to invite or have already invited a guest. If you feel it would be wise, send out notices to parents in advance of the speaker’s arrival to let them know of the upcoming lesson.

3. Do not let your principal or a fellow teacher convince you that you need to have your guest address the whole school in an assembly. Your students will benefit most from one-on-one time with the official. They will get a feel for the person and the job, and will have a chance to get their individual questions answered. They will be less likely to miss the points of the talk if they are in the familiar classroom environment under your watchful eye.

4. Always prepare your guest speaker before he or she arrives. When making the appointment, tell the guest the kinds of lessons you have been conducting and then follow up your conversation with a letter listing the main concepts you have covered with your students. If there have been controversial subjects that have arisen in discussions, or if there are questions you did not feel confident about answering, let the guest know in advance. The American Bar Association offers hints for attorneys who are guest speakers. Your visitors may find this to be helpful to them, too, especially if you send it before their visit!

5. Choose the timing of the guest’s visit to come towards the end of your unit on city government. It is a waste of the guest’s time to give students the basics of city government. After they know something of the workings of their municipality, have the guest come to answer higher level questions.

6. Make students responsible for how the class goes.
   • Have each student write down three questions they have for the speaker. Collect their questions in advance of the visit, make encouraging notes to students about their questions, and then return student question sheets on the day of the speaker’s visit. By doing this, all students will have something written down that they can ask, and the questions do not have to be dominated by vocal members of the class. Also, each student will have a stake in listening to the speaker and having his or her own unique concerns addressed.
   • Have each student make a paper name plate giving his or her first name, and have students place these on their desks in a clearly visible spot. This helps your guest feel a little more in touch with the students, allows him or her to customize answers and refer specifically to points made by students, and helps nervous speakers remember that this is a group of middle school individuals, not a sea of anonymous teenagers.
   • Assign greeters to meet the speaker in the office.
   • If the class meets around lunch time, select interested students to take him or her to the cafeteria for lunch.

7. Be there in the classroom the whole time your speaker is there. Of course it is tempting to leave for a few minutes since another adult is with your class. But that other adult is not used to working with students and may well be intimidated by them. Besides, if you stay, you will be able to take notes and follow up on key points made by the speaker.

8. Encourage speakers to bring visual aids, pamphlets, business cards, sample documents (affidavits, voter registration cards, ordinances, and the like). Discourage speakers from showing films. This cuts into your guest speaker’s time interacting with your students, which is the whole point of having the speaker come. Ask the speaker to solicit questions and input from students, and role play if possible.

9. Encourage students to write substantive thank-you notes to the speaker.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Students may be able to participate in a job shadowing or career connection program during the summer. These opportunities will allow students to get real experiences with city government and the jobs available.

Evaluation: Written thank-you notes to the speaker.
XV. What if Nobody Bothered to Vote?

WHAT?
Students will write an editorial or letter to the editor about voter apathy relating to municipal issues.

WHY?
- To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
- To describe how people from selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture
- To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:
Geography:
- Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
- Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas
Economic:
- Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
- Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world
Government:
- Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
- Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution
Citizenship:
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
- Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society
Culture:
- Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas
Social Studies Skills:
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
- Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
- Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials needed:
A copy of the scenario description, “It was Election Day in Our Town” for each student

Suggested Teaching Time: 1 class period

Suggested Procedures:
1. Present students with the scenario and ask them to consider the questions.
2. Have students prepare their letters to the editor and story endings. Circulate among students to gauge their understanding.
3. Have students share their work with the class.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Have students rate the effectiveness of their letters. Discuss the characteristics that make especially good letters more effective than the others. Ask a precinct chair to come to class to share experiences with students.

Evaluation: Evaluate the students’ letters and stories.
It Was Election Day in Our Town

It was 7:00 AM on city election day and the workers at the polling place were ready. The voting booths stood waiting. The ballots lay on the tables ready to be marked. Workers kept looking at the door to see who would be the first to vote that day. And they waited. And they waited.

About 10:00 Mr. Valdez, election judge, came in to vote—the first voter all day. The precinct volunteers told him that the voter turn-out was the lowest ever: only one voter. “Don’t worry,” he said. “People know how important it is to vote. They’ll eventually come.” After he left the polling place, though, he thought it might be a good idea to call some registered voters to encourage them to vote.

This is what the people he called said. For each response below, think of a reply that might motivate the citizen to think twice about their decision not to vote. Remember to make your reply respectful and thoughtful.

a. “It’s just a city election. I don’t vote in those. I just vote for the president.”

b. “My child is sick- I can’t vote.”

c. “It’s raining- I don’t want to go out today.”

d. “I work nights. I need to sleep during the day.”

e. “I don’t even know who’s running.”

f. “I’m just one person. It won’t matter if I don’t vote.”

g. “I lost my voting card.”

h. “Politicians are all alike. It doesn’t matter who gets elected.”
Other voters did eventually go to the poll, but the voter turnout was only 10 percent. That means nine registered voters out of 10 did not vote in the election. Some people believe that our democratic government is in trouble when most people give up their opportunity to vote. Then only a few people can make decisions that affect everyone.

Think about the bad consequences that could happen if most people in your town do not bother to vote.

- Who has power in that situation?
- Who is powerless in that situation?
- How could power to govern your town be misused?
- Who might be glad that more citizens did not vote?
Election Day Follow Up Assignment

Choose your assignment:

1. Imagine that you are Mr. Valdez. Write a letter to the editor of your town’s newspaper. In your letter, explain what happened on election day and what you think about it. Be as specific as you can in explaining at least three reasons for your opinion. Make your letter as persuasive as possible.

2. Look into the future in your town where few people take the time to vote. Imagine what this town government will be like in 50 years. Imagine the kinds of laws the city council might have passed. Imagine what the town will look like. Imagine who will have benefited and who will have been hurt by this set of events. Write a short story in which you describe the way this town turned out. You may make up names for characters, laws, events, and so forth, as you need them in the story.
XVI. Organizing Our Own Home Rule City

WHAT?
Students will analyze the various forms of city government and design their own municipal government.

WHY?
• To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
• To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels
• To describe how people from selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture
• To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
• To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
• To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
• To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Geography:
• Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
• Understand the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

Economic:
• Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
• Understand the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world

Government:
• Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
• Understand the structure and functions of government created by the Texas Constitution

Citizenship:
• Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens
• Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society

Culture:
• Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

Social Studies Skills:
• Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
• Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
• Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
• Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influences on U. S. History
• Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Material Needed:
- Copies of questions that students must answer by organizing their city government

Suggested Teaching Time: two class periods

Suggested Procedures:
1. Divide class into groups of three to four students
2. Tell students that they will have the responsibility for planning the government of a town that will be seeking a city charter in the near future.
3. Instruct groups to think carefully and decide on the following issues:
   - How many leaders do you want? Why?
   - Do you want the mayor to be strong or weak? Explain.
   - Do you want a City Manager? Why?
   - Would you pass high or low property taxes for the new city?
   - What are the budget priorities in your city? What programs or projects will you fund most generously? Explain your thinking.
   - Which city departments will you form? (Name two to twenty). Why should those be the first ones?
   - How will you encourage citizens to get involved in your town?
   - Name your town.
4. Have groups present their ideas with the class in a creative presentation.
5. After all presentations, discuss the decision-making process used by each group.

Follow-Up Possibilities: Invite a local official to provide input on the ideas. Vote on the best city plan from all the ones created by the class. Determine what features of that plan made it favored over the others.

Evaluation: Grade the group presentations on how thoroughly they answered the questions in their presentation.
XVII. Getting Involved in Our Town: A Research Project

WHAT?
Students will analyze their town using current research and data to predict future trends for their town.

WHY?
- To explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- To describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels.
- To describe how people from selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture
- To analyze the economic impact of the free enterprise system in local, national, and international markets
- To analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions
- To use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages/disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- To use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

Geography:
- Understand the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas
- Understand the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas

Economic:
- Understand the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society
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- Understand the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution
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- Understand the concept of diversity within unity in Texas

Social Studies Skills:
- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology

Communicate in written, oral, and visual form
- Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

TAAS:
- Objective 1: Civic Values and Responsibilities
- Objective 2: Economic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 3: Political Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 4: Geographic Influences on U. S. History
- Objective 6: Sociological and Cultural Influence on U. S. History
- Objective 8: Critical-Thinking Skills
HOW?

Materials Needed:
• Copies of the questions for consideration for each of the areas of study

Suggested Teaching Time: possibly a semester project, but at least two weeks to study, of which 3 to 5 class periods for research and writing would be needed

Suggested Procedures:
1. **Divide the class into town “task forces”** to study issues of importance to the town. Five such areas with suggested questions for consideration are presented in the sheet that follows, but feel free to select other areas of specific local concern (energy needs and supplies, transportation planning, ethics in local government, funding needed programs, interracial relations, etc.).

2. **First impressions:** Ask each member of the task force to write answers for the questions presented. Each question should be addressed from the three points of view of reality, predictions, and dreams for the future. Students are not expected to know factual answers; rather, this is a time to record student impressions about the subject and to measure how much they may already know. Have each task force meet to share these initial impressions and to identify students who may already know facts or have strong feelings about the issues.

3. **Research:** Have students research their topics to become “experts” in the issues. They may consult newspapers, town reports, councilmembers, town employees, special interest groups, and so forth. Depending on the questions and the availability of sources of information, this stage of the process may take a week or two. Alternatively, this may be a semester-long project in which students meet in their task forces for a short time each week to update other members of their findings.

4. **Fact or Opinion?** Have students write down on index cards two statements they collected in the course of answering their questions- one fact and one opinion.
   • Briefly discuss the meanings of “fact” and “opinion.” One way to think about these concepts is that smart, well-informed people often disagree about opinions, and opinions have not yet been proven or would be very difficult to prove. Smart people are likely to hold different opinions about the same set of facts. Facts are usually agreed on by well-informed people and can be proven by observation, experiment, counting, sorting, or some other systematic or objective means.
   • Choose from these cards examples to read aloud to the class and have each student decide if a given statement is a fact or an opinion. Students could indicate with their fingers in the shape of an “O” if the statement is an opinion and show two fingers sideways (like an “F”) if it is a fact. If you prefer, students could write down answers to the statement.
   • To reinforce the difference between fact and opinion, ask students if the statement could be proven objectively, and if so, how.

5. **Have each task force member write a “position paper”** about an area they have researched. In this paper they should:
   • Ask a probing, thoughtful question about their task force’s topic. (Would it be good for our town if..., Should our town..., What would be the best time to ..., Can we afford ..., What will happen if..., Where is the best place to... Who should be the one to... What would be the best way for us to...).
   • Give key facts that address the question.
   • State their opinion about the subject and explain their position.
   • Present a plan of action: who should do what, when should it happen, where should it happen, how it could be paid for.

6. **Have students solicit feedback on their positions**, from other students, from councilmembers or other government personnel, from citizen groups, etc.
7. **Have students revise their original position:** Have students look back over the original chart they filled out about problems in their town. Ask them to evaluate the strength of their original position and whether they have changed their minds at all after research, input from their task force and the writing of the position paper.

   - If their opinion is still the same on the issue, have them write down the one fact that they believe is most important to supporting their opinion. Have the student name the person or source of information that he or she found to be most affirming of their position.
   - If their position has changed, have them explain what fact or point of view was most important in swaying them to shift their position.

8. **Debrief:** Ask students to consider
   - how many of them learned a new or surprising fact in the project.
   - how many of them changed their minds about the subject at least a little bit.
   - if they did change their minds, what convinced them to do so: more thorough information, seeing things from another person’s perspective, peer pressure, a dramatic event that occurred while they were studying, etc.
   - whether it is reasonable to expect elected officials to continue to hold an opinion over the course of a number of years.
Task Force Questionnaire

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<tr>
<th>The Way It Is</th>
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<th>The Way I Think It Should Be</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Reality as I See It)</td>
<td>(My Predictions)</td>
<td>(My Dreams)</td>
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Personal Safety and Crime
1. How big a problem is crime in our town? Is crime increasing, decreasing or staying about the same?
2. Which crimes are the biggest problems?
3. Who is affected most by crimes? How has the crime issue changed the way people live?
4. What seems to be causing most of the crime in our town?
5. Do people feel safe in our town? Who feels most secure and who feels unsafe? WHY?
6. What is our town government doing now to help prevent crimes?
7. Which agencies in our town government are involved with safety and crime issues? What are they doing now?
8. If I wanted to change things, who could I talk to and what could I do?

Population and Size of Our Town
1. Is our town’s population bigger or smaller than it was 10 years ago? How much larger or smaller is it?
2. Who are the newcomers or the people moving away? What are their ages, ethnicity, skills, needs, hopes and dreams?
3. What has been the main reason for the change in population? (a change in the businesses in town, quality of life in our town, the cost of living in our town, a change outside our town that pulled people away or brought people here, etc.)
4. What has been good about the change in our town’s population?
5. What problems have resulted from the change?
6. Have the boundaries of our town expanded?
7. How have the changes in the town’s boundaries affected us?
8. How do the ways we live and work in our town change the way people think about living here?

Sports, Recreation, and Other Fun Public Activities
1. Other than private homes, where do people go to have fun in our town? (If there are a lot of places, you may want to list categories, such as bowling alleys, snack bars, pools, etc.)
2. Which age groups and interest groups use these facilities in our town? Are they used a lot or very seldom?
3. Who runs these facilities? Are these public places open to everyone? Are they private clubs or places of business?
4. How much does it cost to take part in the activities there? Is it paid for out of taxes, entrance fees, membership fees, user fees, or donations?
5. Where are the various recreational places located in our town? (downtown, in neighborhoods, on the outskirts of town, near schools, etc.)
6. Are there recreational and sports activities that need a space or more space for their activity? What are they and what kind of space do they need? (pools, soccer fields, studios for artists or musicians, golf courses, etc.) Do they have any suitable place in town where they can participate in their sport or hobby?
7. How does having or not having certain kinds of recreational and sports facilities help or hurt our town?
8. How would having more or fewer places for recreational and sports activities change our town? Would these be good or bad changes?

The Environment and Pollution
1. Think of all of the kinds of pollution in our town: air, water, noise, etc. What are the major reasons we have pollution in our town? (businesses, human waste, cars, litter, etc.)
2. What benefits do we enjoy from the activities that are also sources of pollution?
3. Has pollution increased or decreased in our town since we were born?
4. Who is affected most by the pollution in our town? Are there particular parts of town that are polluted more than others?
5. What level of pollution is acceptable to most people in our town?
6. Who should decide how much pollution is acceptable?
7. What special environmental resources do we have in our town? (places, animals, bodies of water, views, plants, wilderness areas) Which of these are protected by laws and ordinances at this time? Which ones do we need to protect in the future?
8. Who would be helped and who would be hurt if we limit what people can do in order to protect natural resources in our town?
Parks
1. What are the most interesting natural places in our area? Where are they located—on private land or park land? (for example, waterfalls, hiking trails, cliffs, etc.)
2. What kinds of ways do people in our town use parks? (sports, picnics, walking, playgrounds, concerts, zoos, sleeping, etc.)
3. Which parts of town have the most parks? Are there places with no parks nearby? Would these be nice places to put a park or are they unsuitable?
4. How expensive is it to run the parks we now have in our town? How is the cost of running the parks paid?
5. What condition are our town’s parks in right now? Are they maintained well? How many people use them? Are there problems that need solving?
6. Are there areas in or near our town that would make good parks? Who owns the land? What would have to be done to turn that land into a park?
7. Why might some people in our town be against making a new park? Why would other people want new parks?
8. How would creating a park change the environment and natural resources of a place?

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Personal Safety and Crime

Population and Size of Our Town

Sports, Recreation, Fun Activities

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Parks