

# IX. Everyone in Town Likes City Park

## 9 Activity

### 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.