

VII. A Closer Look at the Mayor of Our Town

7 Activity

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.

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.