

V. An Overview of Local Governments in Texas

5 Activity

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.

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.