

XIII. Checking out Town Documents: The Charter and the Budget

13 Activity

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.

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