

## Lesson 3: Local Government

### Focus Questions:

Why is civic participation an important aspect of government?

What can we do to participate in our local community?

### Activity # 1 Simulation: “A Neighborhood Problem”

**Materials needed:** For each group, a copy of *Problem Planning Sheet* (Handout #3.1) and *Neighborhood Problem* (Handout # 3.2)

Inform students that many laws and rules are passed because interested citizens and groups become involved. Introduce the simulation prompt:

**Simulation:** A park has just been built in your city. The park has new play equipment, picnic benches, a bike trail, and new basketball courts. The kids of the neighborhood are all excited! However, the city council has decided to put up a sign that says “NO SKATEBOARDING ALLOWED!” A meeting will be held on Tuesday night about the sign. Your group will present at the meeting.

Distribute a copy of the *Problem Planning Sheet* (Handout #3.1). Have students complete the sheet in groups and then share their responses with the entire class. Combine the ideas and complete one composite planning sheet for the problem.

Designate students in your class to be members of the city council. (The size of the city council varies in different communities. Five members are common, or use the number from your community’s city council.) Assign the other students to one of the six representative groups involved (Handout #3.2). Have the students pretend that they are members of that group and ask them to come up with arguments to support their position.

Each group should present their arguments to the group of students who have been designated as members of the City Council. The City Council should then vote on a decision about the park situation based on the arguments.

Lead a discussion with the students about the influence each group had on the decision.

Ask students, “Why is civic participation an important aspect of local government?”

### Activity # 2 Local Governments

**Materials needed:** Harcourt *Reflections* pages 480 to 487, or any state-adopted social studies textbook.

As students read the text, have them summarize how California’s local governments are organized and describe the function of each part of government. Compare and contrast county government with municipal government.

Questions to ask:

- Which level of government do you think has the greatest impact on your life? Explain your answer.
- What costs and benefits might a mayor or city council think about when deciding whether to fix up a local park?

### **Teacher Background: Types of Local Government**

Although local government is a focus of Grade 3 Standard 4, it is appropriate to review this level of government as part of this 4<sup>th</sup> grade standard.

There are two kinds of local government: county government, and city or town government. Cities or towns have two different forms of government, the Council- Manager or the Mayor-Council. Most cities in California have the **council-manager** form of government. In the council manager form of government, voters elect a city council. The city council chooses one of its members as mayor and also hires a city manager to help run the city. In some cities, the mayor is elected directly by the people.

#### Functions of Local Government

1. Makes laws for counties, cities and towns
2. Provides law enforcement and fire protection
3. Provides health care and social services for the needy
4. Provides libraries and hospitals
5. Provides roads and parks
6. Provides water, sewer, and garbage collection

#### Incorporation:

1. A community need not become a city. It is a choice which local residents must make.
2. All areas of the state are within a county and under its law-making authority.
3. A community may choose to gain some independence from county rule by incorporating as a municipality (city).
4. There are different reasons for becoming incorporated: to gain more control over land use, to improve services (parks, trash removal, police), and to maintain a separate identity from a neighboring city or from the county.
5. It is not an easy choice to incorporate. It can mean having to pay more for the improved local services (street maintenance, fire, police).

### **Activity # 3 Make an Economic Decision**

Explain to students that both people and governments must look at the costs and benefits of spending money on things they want and need. Sometimes they must make trade-offs when deciding the things they will do. A **trade-off** is giving up one thing to get something else. The thing that is given up is called the **opportunity cost**.

Simulation: You are the mayor of a city in California. The municipal government has money available for a public project. There is enough money to build a bike path or a basketball court, but not both. Which project would you approve? Why?


Place students into groups, each one representing a different city. Students should first think about the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, the bike path and the basketball court. They must then make their economic decision and identify the trade-offs and the opportunity cost of their choice.



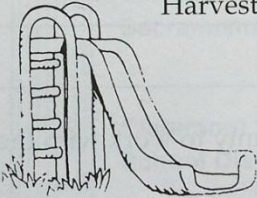

Note: This activity can be found in Harcourt *Reflections* “Make an Economic Decision” on pages 488-489.

## Activity # 4 Another Economic Decision

Simulation: You are the mayor of *Anytown*, a city in California. The city council has just approved the budget for next year. You have \$10,000 to spend on “extras” for the town. You feel that *Anytown* needs police and fire department upgrades, roadwork on Main Street, new playground equipment for the park, school maintenance equipment, and new chairs for the library. You would also like to have an Independence Day Parade and a Harvest Festival.

Look at the costs below. Choose how to spend the “extras” budget for your city.

Anytown “Extras” Budget		\$10,000.00
	Police department upgrade	\$2,500.00
	Fire department upgrade	\$2,500.00
	Roadwork on Main Street	\$1,500.00
	New playground equipment	\$1,500.00
	School maintenance equipment	\$3,000.00
	New chairs for Anytown Library	\$2,000.00
	Independence Day parade	\$500.00
	Harvest Festival	\$1,000.00



Questions to ask:

- What do you think are the three most important budget items to spend money on? Explain your answer.
- Based on the budget, how would you spend the \$10,000?
- What are the opportunity costs of your budget?

Source: Harcourt *Reflections* Homework and Practice Book pages 134 and 135.

## Activity # 5 Civic Participation Project

Materials needed: For each group of students, a copy of ***Problem Planning Sheet*** (Handout #3.1) and ***Civic Participation Project*** (Handout # 3.3).

Brainstorm with students a list of ideas for each of the following categories.

- What are some ways that people participate in local, state and national government?
- How might we participate in our community?

Prompt: Work together in a group to select a problem in your school or your community. Research the problem to provide accurate details and show the significance of the problem. Include several examples to compare and contrast multiple perspectives on the problem and its solution. On a separate sheet of paper, complete a ***Problem Planning Sheet***. Develop an action plan to solve the problem. Put your plan into action and evaluate the results.

### Problem Planning Sheet

- A. What is the Problem?
- B. Why is it a problem?
- C. Who is responsible?
- D. What are some possible solutions to the problem?

Rubric:

Indicator: Historical Interpretation and Analysis of Significance

Indicator: Supports the Topic with Accurate Details

Indicator: Uses Multiple Perspectives

Recommended Correlation: Summary Writing Rubric

Let the students select the project they would like to undertake that will make their community a better place to live. It may be a total class project or different groups can select their own project. On a separate sheet of paper, students complete the *Problem Planning Sheet*. Develop an action plan to solve the school or community problem.

Some ideas include:

- Beautify your school by creating a garden.
- Create a recycling program for soda cans, water bottles and/or newspapers.
- Adopt an area of the schoolyard to keep clean. Encourage other classes to do the same.
- For a homeless shelter, collect shoes, eyeglasses, and/or children’s books.

### Assessment

Standard	Lesson	Title	Teacher Directions	Handout for students with the prompt and rubric
4.5	3	Civic Participation Project	pages 21-22	page 25, Handout # 3.3

Additional assessment of this lesson is integrated with the instruction and occurs throughout the lesson rather than just at the end. The focus questions provide a framework for the evaluation of the lesson.

- Read the textbook selection about California’s Constitution and explain the purpose of the state constitution.
- Participate in a Neighborhood Problem simulation and complete a *Neighborhood Problem Planning Sheet* (Handout #3.1) Activity # 1
- Analyze the costs and benefits for the budget of “your town” and make an economic decision. (Activities # 3 and #4)
- Explain why civic participation is an important aspect of government. Activities #1-5

## **Problem Planning Sheet**

A. What is the Problem?

B. Why is it a problem?

C. Who is responsible?

D. What are some possible solutions to the problem?

## **Neighborhood Problem**

A park has just been built in your city. The park has new play equipment, picnic benches, a bike trail, and new basketball courts. The kids of the neighborhood are all excited! However, the city council has decided to put up a sign that says **NO SKATEBOARDING ALLOWED!** A meeting will be held on Tuesday night about the sign. Your group will present at the meeting.

### **SKATEBOARD ASSOCIATION:**

Position: You want the sign taken down. You think you should be able to skateboard in the park because it is a public place.

### **PARENT'S GROUPS:**

Position: You have small children that play in the park. You are afraid that a skateboarder might run over your small children.

### **YOUTH GROUP:**

Position: There aren't many things for teenagers to do in your neighborhood. Skateboarding is good exercise and the park is a safe place to skate.

### **POLICE ASSOCIATION:**

Position: Almost every day they must go to the park because someone is complaining about the skateboarders being dangerous.

### **MR. GRUMP:**

Position: He is mad because skateboards are too loud and he can't take his afternoon nap. He wants to get ride of them.

### **MR. DORIGHT:**

Position: He thinks it's wonderful to see youngsters enjoying the fresh air and sunshine. He wants everyone to stop picking on the skateboarders.

### **CITY COUNCIL:**

Must listen to all the arguments and then make a decision.

## Civic Participation Project

**Prompt:** Work together in a group to select a problem in your school or your community. Research the problem to provide accurate details and show the significance of the problem. Include several examples to compare and contrast multiple perspectives on the problem and its solution. On a separate sheet of paper, complete a *Problem Planning Sheet*. Develop an action plan to solve the problem. Put your plan into action and evaluate the results.

### Problem Planning Sheet

A. What is the Problem?

B. Why is it a problem?

C. Who is responsible?

D. What are some possible solutions to the problem?

INDICATORS	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	BASIC	BELOW BASIC
<b>HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>	Student shows an in-depth understanding of the significance of the topic in history; has a clear conclusion with historical evidence; links the topic to today.	Student shows the significance of the topic in history; concludes with adequate historical evidence; links the topic to today.	Student shows the significance of the topic in history; concludes with some historical evidence; attempts to link the topic to today.	Student makes no statement or suggestion that the topic is significant; uses vague or no evidence; fails to link the topic to today.
<b>SUPPORTS THE TOPIC WITH ACCURATE EXAMPLES</b>	Student supports the topic with insightful examples.	Student supports the topic with several accurate examples.	Student supports the topic with limited examples.	Student has few or no examples.
<b>USES MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES</b>	Student uses many historically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.	Student uses several historically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.	Student uses limited historically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.	Student uses few or no historically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.