

- As a class, make a list of all of the important services provided in your community. Then students can conduct research to find out which services are provided by which level of government.
- Encourage students to further research your local and state government. Many towns, counties and states have excellent web sites for kids that clearly explain how local and state governments function (A few good examples are www.leg.state.fl.us/kids/home.html from the state of Florida and www.cityofflorenceky.com/kids_page_1.htm for a specific city in Kentucky).
- Students can choose a significant person from one level of American government — a mayor, state legislator or Supreme Court justice. They can learn about this influential person through Internet and print resources. Then students can present their information by portraying the person in costume for the class.
- Many public officials who work in federal government started out in either a local or state governmental position. Research the histories of Presidents such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan to discover their political path to the White House. Encourage students to discuss why many politicians might start out in local or state government before moving to a federal position.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.statelocalgov.net/index.cfm

This web site provides an index of links for finding out information about individual state and local governments.

- bensguide.gpo.gov

"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" is a wonderful site with grade-specific material on the character and history of American government. Details about the functioning of federal, state and local government are provided, in addition to "quick facts" about individual states. Links to state pages for kids are also offered.

- www.whitehousekids.gov

The web site of the White House has a special section for kids, which includes a tour of the White House, information about the President's family and an American History interactive quiz. A helpful guide for teachers and parents is also provided.

Suggested Print Resources

- Giesecke, Ernestine. *Local Government*. Heinemann Library, Chicago, IL; 2000.
- Giesecke, Ernestine. *National Government*. Heinemann Library, Chicago, IL; 2000.
- Giesecke, Ernestine. *State Government*. Heinemann Library, Chicago, IL; 2000.
- LeVert, Suzanne. *Congress*. Scholastic, Inc., New York, NY; 2004.
- Sobel, Syl. *How the U.S. Government Works*. Barron's, Hauppauge, NY; 1999.
- Stein, Richard Conrad. *The Powers of the Supreme Court*. Children's Press, Chicago, IL; 1995.

TEACHER'S GUIDE CONSULTANT

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COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP | • A HISTORY OF THE PRESIDENCY |
| • FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT | • THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT |
| • THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT | • WHAT IS GOVERNMENT? |

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FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Grades K-4

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the video series *American Government For Children*.

Before Viewing: Give students an introduction to the topic by relaying aspects of the program overview to them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

After Viewing: Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



Program Overview

All three levels of government — local, state and federal — provide Americans with a large variety of services, from traffic lights to the roads that we travel on! Local government manages the basic services of small areas, such as cities and towns. State government looks after statewide responsibilities, and the federal government takes on responsibilities that affect the entire nation. There are thousands of local governments, 50 state governments and just one national government, although it has many complex parts.

The three branches of these levels of government resemble each other in certain respects. Each has an executive leader, a law-making body and a court system. At the local level, the leader of a city or town is called a mayor, while at the state level, he or she is called a governor. At the national level, the chief executive is called the President of the United States. Similarly, local law-making bodies are usually referred to as city councils and at the state level, legislatures. At the national level, the legislature is called Congress and is composed of two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. As for the interpretation and application of laws, there are courts, presided over by judges. At the state and local levels, judges may be either elected or appointed. The national government features the U.S. Supreme Court, whose members are appointed by the President.

Governments at all levels provide certain services to those they serve. City streets, traffic lights and community parks are all provided by local governments. The services provided by local governments are mirrored on a larger scale by other levels of government. State governments care for state highways and state parks, and the federal government provides interstate highways and national parks and monuments. Of course, all of these services must be paid for, and this is done through taxes. By providing these services, all levels of government work together to make our country far cleaner, safer and more prosperous than it would be without them.

Vocabulary

government — The people and groups who make, carry out and enforce rules and laws, and who manage disputes about them.

local government — The level of government with responsibilities for individual cities, towns and counties.

state government — The level of government with responsibilities for individual states.

federal government — The level of government responsible for the entire nation.

mayor — The head of a local government.

governor — The head of a state's executive branch of government.

President of the United States — The highest official in the executive branch of federal government.

appointment — The method of choosing a public official by selection rather than voting.

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city council — The law-making body of local government.

democracy — A form of government in which people rule themselves.

laws — Written rules that are made and enforced by governments.

legislators — Members of a group that makes laws at the state and federal levels of government.

judges — People who interpret laws to find out what they mean and to apply them to individual cases to decide if the law has been broken.

U.S. Congress — The law-making body of federal government.

veto — An action of refusing to sign a bill into law by a state governor or the President.

court — An official body that interprets and applies laws.

U.S. Supreme Court — The highest court in the United States.

constitution — A document that describes what government is allowed to do and what it is not allowed to do. The U.S. Constitution is the highest law in America.

tax — Money paid by people to support the work of government.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- American government has three levels: local, state and federal. Discuss with students what they think these three levels do and why U.S. government might have multiple levels of government. What do students think might be the advantages to having more than one level? Do they think there might be drawbacks to this kind of system?
- Services like health and safety are provided by local, state and federal levels of American government. Do students think it's a good idea for government to provide these services? Why or why not? How might these services get provided if government did not do this work?
- Present a current issue to your students, like maintaining a clean environment. Encourage them to brainstorm about what each level of government might do to address an issue like this one.

Focus Questions

1. What are the three levels of U.S. government? What kinds of responsibilities does each level have?
2. Who is in charge of local government in a city or town?
3. Who are the chief executives of state and federal government?
4. What is a town meeting in New England?
5. What is the difference between being elected and being appointed?
6. Who makes laws that apply to a town or city?
7. Who makes laws at the state and federal levels of government?
8. What are some of the responsibilities of the President of the United States?
9. What is a veto, and why is it important?

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10. What do judges do, and how can a person become a judge?

11. Who are U.S. Supreme Court justices and how do they achieve that position?

12. What are some important services provided by U.S. government?

13. How are these services paid for?

Follow-up Discussion

- United States government at all levels provides Americans with many valuable services, like education, health and safety. Encourage students to discuss the most important services that government at any level provides. Which service do students feel is the most important? Why?
- Compare the chief executives from each level of government. How are they similar and different? Why do students think that being governor might prepare someone for becoming President? If students could choose to be a mayor, governor or President, which position would they select, and why?
- Local government serves the smallest amount of people, and federal government, the largest. Discuss with students how this difference in responsibility influences the functioning of each level of government. Do students think that federal government could be run in "town meeting" style, with people talking for themselves? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

- Invite a representative of local government to visit your class and engage in a conversation with students on the responsibilities of this level of government. Prepare for the visit by asking students to think of questions they wish to ask the government official, such as how the local government interacts with state and federal government, and what services local government provides to the community.
- Take your class on a field trip to a local, state or federal government setting, such as a court room or public meeting, to see government in action. Students can then create a class book that details what they saw, heard and learned from the experience.
- Have the class examine the government section of a local telephone book in depth. Have them see what can they learn about what different levels of government do and who to contact if they have a question or problem in different areas in which government functions.
- Conduct a town meeting in your own classroom! Encourage students to speak up about issues that affect them on a classroom level. Students should be directed to show respect and good listening skills toward each other during this class meeting. Students should also work together to brainstorm solutions to classroom concerns. After completing the town meeting, help students to discuss what worked and what didn't about this style of problem solving. Do they think local governments encounter similar problems during their town meetings? Why or why not?

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