

## Lesson 9: Our Local Government

**Grade Level:** K-5

**Objective:** Students will learn about the structure and purpose of local government. They will explore the roles of local leaders and how they help their community.

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### Focus Skills:

**Identifying and Applying Civic Knowledge** Students will learn about the roles and responsibilities of local government and how they address community needs.

**Analyzing Civic Engagement** Students will understand how local leaders and citizens work together to solve problems in their community.

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### Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
  - Printed copies of “Our Local Government” (text provided below)
  - Simple text of the Constitution's Preamble
  - Large poster paper or chart paper labeled "Government in Action"
  - Pre-cut paper shapes (squares for city council, circles for the mayor, stars for police officers, etc.)
  - Markers, crayons, and glue, construction paper
  - Stickers or magazine cut-outs for decoration (optional)
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### Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the key roles in local government.
  - Understand how local government helps their community.
  - Express their understanding of local government through creative design.
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### Introduction (5 Minutes):

**Discussion Prompt:** “What do you think our local government does? How does it help the community?”

- Write student answers on the board. Guide them to recognize that local government helps make decisions about their city or town, such as keeping parks clean, making sure roads are safe to drive on, and organizing community events.
  - Ask, “Can you think of any rules or laws that help your school or neighborhood be safe and functional?”
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## Reading Time (15 Minutes):

Read *Understanding Local Government* aloud.

### “Understanding Local Government”

*Local government is made up of people who help make decisions that affect your community, like your town or city. These leaders work together to make sure things run smoothly and that everyone has what they need to live in a safe, happy place.*

*In every town or city, there are different people who have special jobs. For example, the **mayor** is like the leader of the whole town. They help make big decisions, like fixing the roads, planning events, and making sure everyone in the community is treated fairly. The mayor doesn't make decisions alone. They work with the **city council**, a group of people who help decide on laws and rules for the community.*

*Other important leaders in the local government include **police officers** who help keep everyone safe, **firefighters** who respond to emergencies, and **school board members** who make sure schools have everything they need to teach students well.*

*How do these people get their jobs? Many local leaders, like the mayor and city council members, are chosen through elections. That means people in the community vote to decide who will represent them. Voting is an important way to have a say in how the community is run. By choosing leaders who listen to their ideas and concerns, citizens help shape the future of their town or city.*

*Each person has a special role in making the community a good place for everyone. Local government is important because it helps solve problems and make decisions that keep everyone happy, healthy, and safe. By working together, local leaders make sure the community is a great place to live!*

## Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think it's important for there to be different leaders in the community?
- How do you think the mayor or council members make decisions?
- Can you think of a local leader who helps make your community better?

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## Constitution Connection (10 Minutes):

### Introduce the Preamble to the Constitution (Simplified Text):

We the People of the United States work together to make things fair, keep everyone safe, and help each other live happy lives.

### Discuss:

- Explain that while the Constitution sets the foundation for the entire country, local governments have their own rules to make sure things run smoothly at the community level.
- Ask, “How do local governments help us live happy and safe lives, just like the Preamble says?”
- Talk about the roles of local government: mayor, town council, public health workers, school board, etc.

## Questions to Ask:

- What do you think is the most important part of the local government?
  - How do local leaders make sure people's voices are heard in the community?
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### **Activity: "Government in Action" (15 Minutes)**

**Objective:** Students will create a visual representation of local government roles and how these leaders help their community.

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Large poster paper or chart paper labeled "Government in Action"
  - Pre-cut paper shapes (circles, squares, rectangles, triangles, and stars)
  - List of Roles and Definitions
  - Markers, crayons, tape, and glue
  - Stickers or magazine cut-outs for decoration (optional)
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### **Suggested Shapes and Categories:**

#### **1. Safety & Emergency Services (Circle)**

- **Firefighter** – Works to put out fires, respond to emergencies, and keep everyone safe.
- **EMT (Emergency Medical Technician)** – Provides care and assistance during emergencies.
- **Judge** – Ensures laws are fair and helps solve community problems.
- **Police Officer** – Helps keep the community safe by enforcing rules and protecting people.

#### **2. Community Leaders & Decision Makers (Square)**

- **Mayor** – Leads the local government, makes decisions, and represents the community.
- **City Council Member** – Helps make rules and decide on budgets to improve the community.
- **School Board Member** – Oversees school policies and decisions about student learning.
- **Treasurer** – Manages public funds and budgets to keep things running smoothly.
- **Local Business Owner** – Starts businesses that provide jobs and contribute to the community.
- **Community Leader** – Supports and advocates for the well-being of the community.

#### **3. Public Services & Utilities (Rectangle)**

- **Garbage Collector** – Keeps the community clean and healthy by collecting trash.
- **Utility Worker** – Maintains essential services like water, electricity, and sewage systems.
- **Environmental Advocate** – Protects natural resources and promotes sustainability.
- **Public Health Official** – Helps create rules to keep the community safe and healthy, especially during emergencies.
- **Transportation Official** – Oversees roads, buses, and other ways to get around safely.

#### 4. Education & Libraries (Triangle)

- **Teacher** – Educates students, shapes the future, and supports the whole community.
- **Librarian** – Provides access to books, resources, and information for learning.
- **Doctor/Nurse** – Takes care of people when they're sick and helps keep the community healthy.

#### 5. Recreation & Wellness (Star)

- **Director of Parks & Recreation** – Maintains parks and organizes activities for people to enjoy.
  - **Social Worker** – Supports families and individuals by providing resources and guidance.
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### Instructions:

#### Introduction (2 Minutes)

- Briefly explain the activity: each student will represent a role in local government.
- Show the pre-cut shapes and discuss the categories.

#### Creative Design (10 Minutes)

- Give each student a shape based on the category they are assigned.
- Ask students to draw or write about their role and how it helps the community.
- Examples:
  - **Mayor** shape → Draw a town hall and write: "Mayor – Makes important decisions about the community."
  - **Firefighter** shape → Draw a fire truck and write: "Firefighter – Responds to emergencies and keeps our community safe."
- Students can decorate their shapes with markers, crayons, stickers, or magazine cut-outs if desired.

#### Assembly (3 Minutes)

- Have students take turns placing their shapes on the "Government in Action" board.
  - As each student places their shape, they briefly explain the role they represent.
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#### Closing and Reflection (5-10 Minutes):

- Ask students:
    - "What did you learn about local government today?"
    - "How do you think local leaders help make your community better?"
  - Conclude by discussing how all of the roles work together to create a fair, safe, and happy community.
  - Challenge students to think about how they can be leaders in their own community, even at school or at home.
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## Assessment:

- **Participation in Discussion:** Did the student engage with the questions and explain the role of local government?
- **Contribution to the “Government in Action” Board:** Did the student create a clear and thoughtful representation of a local government role?
- **Reflection:** Did the student connect the activity to the real world concept of local government and understand its importance?

## Suggested Booklist: Learning About Local Government

- For Which We Stand: How Our Government Works and Why It Matters by Jeff Foster
- Local Governments by Connor Stratton
- Grace for President by Kelly DiPucchio
- The President of the Jungle by Andrew Rodrigues, Larissa Ribeiro, Paula Desgualdo, Pedro Markun

## Roles and Definitions:

1. **Mayor** – Leads the local government, makes important decisions, and represents the community
2. **City Council Member** – Helps make rules and decide on things like budgets to improve the community.
3. **Police Officer** – Helps keep the community safe by enforcing rules and protecting people.
4. **Firefighter** – Works to put out fires, helps in emergencies, and keeps everyone safe.
5. **Teacher** – Teaches students, helps them learn, and supports the whole community.
6. **Doctor/Nurse** – Takes care of people when they're sick and helps keep the community healthy.
7. **Garbage Collector** – Picks up trash to keep the community clean and healthy.
8. **Librarian** – Helps people find books and information to learn and grow.
9. **Treasurer** – Manages the community's money to make sure things run smoothly.
10. **Judge** – Makes sure rules are fair and helps solve problems.
11. **Local Business Owner** – Starts businesses that provide jobs and help the community grow.
12. **Community Leader** – Works to support others and make the community a better place.
13. **Social Worker** – Helps families and people get the support they need.
14. **School Board Member** – Helps make decisions about schools and how students learn.
15. **Environmental Advocate** – Works to protect nature and make sure the environment stays healthy.
16. **Public Health Official** – Helps make rules to keep the community safe & healthy, especially in emergencies.
17. **Utility Worker** – Takes care of important services like water, electricity, and garbage collection.
18. **Director of Parks & Recreation** – Helps keep parks and fun activities for people to enjoy.
19. **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)** – Provides help and care for people in emergencies.
20. **Transportation Official** – Helps keep roads, buses, and other ways to get around safe and running.

## Lesson Extension: Civic Engagement Scavenger Hunt

### Overview:

This out-of-school project invites students to explore local civic spaces and landmarks over time, encouraging them to become familiar with their community and its civic functions. The goal is for students to learn about the people, places, and organizations that help their community run smoothly and serve its members. As students visit these places, they will engage with the environment by drawing, writing, or taking photos of their experiences, reflecting on how these spaces contribute to civic life.

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### Introduction:

Explain to students and families that they will be on a journey to explore places that help make their community fun and safe. Over several weeks, students can visit one or more of the locations listed below, where they will complete a creative task based on what they see, hear, and learn.

### Discussion Points for Families and Students:

- What does it mean to be a good citizen in your community?
  - What kinds of places help keep your neighborhood, town, or city safe and fun?
  - How do people in our community work together to make our lives better?
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### Materials Needed:

- Civic Engagement Exploration Worksheet (with space for drawing, writing, and taking notes)
  - Pencils, crayons, or markers
  - A camera or smartphone (optional, if the student has access)
  - A notebook to collect reflections and notes from each visit
  - Family Letter template to send home with students
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### How It Works:

With their families, students will visit locations like City Hall, local libraries, fire stations, police stations, parks, and more, documenting their experiences by drawing, writing, or taking photos. After each visit, they will reflect on how these places help their community.

- **Task Examples:**
    - **Draw** a picture of the place or something you saw there (e.g., the building, a statue, or an event).
    - **Write** one thing you learned about how the place helps your community.
    - **Take a photo** of something that represents the work or mission of that location (with permission).
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## List of Possible Local Places to Visit:

### 1. City Hall / Town Hall

**Task:** Draw or write about what happens at City Hall or Town Hall. How do leaders like the mayor or city council help the community?

**Example:** “The mayor makes decisions to improve our city. They might help fix the roads or plan fun events.”

### 2. Local Library

**Task:** Write about how the library helps people in the community or draw a picture of your favorite book or part of the library.

**Example:** “Libraries give us books to read and help people learn new things.”

### 3. Fire Station

**Task:** Draw a firefighter or write about how firefighters help keep us safe.

**Example:** “Firefighters put out fires and help when there is an emergency.”

### 4. Police Station

**Task:** Write about how police officers protect the community or draw a police car.

**Example:** “Police officers make sure everyone is safe and follow the rules.”

### 5. Community Center

**Task:** Take a photo or draw about something that happens at the community center, like a sports game, a meeting, or an event.

**Example:** “The community center is where people come together to play games and have fun.”

### 6. Public Park

**Task:** Draw a picture of a park or write about how parks help the community by giving people a place to play.

**Example:** “Parks are fun because they have playgrounds, grass for picnics, and places to walk.”

### 7. Post Office

**Task:** Write about what happens at the post office or draw a picture of mailboxes or letters.

**Example:** “The post office is where we send and receive letters. It helps people stay connected.”

### 8. Museum or Historical Landmark

**Task:** Write about something interesting you learned at the museum or historical site or draw a picture of the artifact or statue.

**Example:** “This monument honors important people in our community’s history.”

### 9. Volunteer or Charity Organization

**Task:** Write about how volunteers help others or take a photo of something you saw that shows how the organization is helping.

**Example:** “Volunteers help clean up parks or donate food to families in need.”

### 10. School or Playground

**Task:** Draw a picture of something that helps make your school or playground a safe and fun place.

**Example:** “Our school helps us learn and our playground gives us a space to play with friends.”

#### 11. Sanitation Department or Recycling Center

**Task:** Write about why it is important to keep our community clean or draw a picture of the recycling truck.

**Example:** “Sanitation workers help us by picking up trash and recycling so our city stays clean.”

#### 12. Local Farm or Farmers Market

**Task:** Write about how a farm or market provides food for the community or draw something you saw there.

**Example:** “Farmers grow food that we eat. The market helps bring fresh food to people.”

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#### Reflection and Sharing:

Once students have visited one or more of these places, encourage them to share what they’ve learned and created. Students can either present their drawings and writings to the class or share them in a classroom display or virtual gallery.

Possible reflection questions include:

- “Which place was your favorite to visit, and why?”
  - “What do you think is the most important place or person in your community?”
  - “How can you help make your community better, like the people in the places you visited?”
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#### Assessment:

- **Participation:** Was the student able to visit the locations and complete the tasks?
- **Creativity:** Did the student create thoughtful drawings or reflections?
- **Engagement:** Did the student demonstrate understanding of the role each place plays in making the community a better place?

# Civic Engagement Exploration Worksheet

## Instructions:

Over the next few weeks, you will be exploring different places in your community. At each place you visit, use this worksheet to help you reflect on what you learned. You can draw, write, or take photos to show what you saw, how the place helps the community, and why it's important. Be creative and have fun as you explore!

## Place You Visited:

Name of the place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Who did you visit/meet?: \_\_\_\_\_

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## What I Learned About This Place:

Write 1-2 sentences about what you learned. What does this place do for your community?

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## Creative Task:

### Option 1: Draw a Picture

Draw something you saw at this place. It could be the building, something you found interesting, or something that shows what happens there.

### Option 2: Write a Reflection

Write one or two sentences about why this place is important to your community. How does it help people or make the community better?

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## What is Something New You Learned?

What was the most interesting thing you learned about the people or work at this place?

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## Photo Task (Optional):

Take a photo of something that shows what happens at this place. You can also draw a picture of something you see.

- **Photo Description/Caption:**

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## Reflection Questions:

1. How do the people at this place help the community?

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2. Why is this place important to your town or city?

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3. What was your favorite part of visiting this place?

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## Extra Fun!

**Bonus:** If you visited a place with a sign, a logo, or a picture, draw it here!

## Next Stop:

Where would you like to visit next in your community? Write the name of the place you'd like to learn more about:

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**Parent/Guardian Signature (optional):**

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## **Family Letter Template:**

Dear Families,

We're excited to announce an interactive project for our students: the Civic Engagement Scavenger Hunt! This is a wonderful opportunity for your child to explore their local community, learn about civic roles, and engage with the places that help keep our town or city running smoothly. Over the next few weeks, students will be encouraged to visit key locations such as City Hall, libraries, parks, fire stations, and more, documenting their experiences through drawing, writing, and optional photos.

Please encourage your child to discuss what they learn about local government and community services. If they choose to take photos, please remind them to focus on objects, buildings, and events, not individuals, to respect privacy.

Thank you for supporting your child's exploration and learning. We can't wait to hear about their discoveries!

Best,

[Your Name]

[Your School]