

Lesson Plan: Interconnections Between Private and Civic Life – Focus on the County

Connection to POS: Benchmark 4.25 – Powers and characteristics of local government in Virginia

This lesson is modeled after the first one in the Virginia/United States Government Program of Studies notebook. Both are designed for students to examine the connections that exist between their lives and the government by examining the various roles governments play in establishing rules and regulation throughout society. This lesson's scenarios focus on the roles played by County government.



Objectives

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

- describe the distinction between civic life and private life and recognize their interconnections
- evaluate the responsibility of the County government to provide for the health, safety, welfare, comfort, and convenience of its inhabitants
- identify concurrent and exclusive governmental responsibilities



Materials

- chalkboard or overhead



Time Needed

- 15 to 30 minutes



Procedures

1. Begin by explaining to students that you are going to tell them a story of a typical day in the life of a Fairfax County citizen. You can describe the day as a “real” day or a hypothetical one. A sample story is included on the next page to help you develop your own. Before you begin, ask your students to note each occurrence during the story when the government, at any level (Federal, State, County), had some connection to or impact on the story.
2. After you have read the story, ask the class to cite examples of when they noted governmental involvement in the story. Write these down on the board, differentiating the various levels of government involved.
3. Lead a discussion on the degree to which government is involved in a person’s life. Also, have the students consider which level of government is playing the most active role in their own life. This is a good launching point for discussing concepts such as federalism, devolution, citizen involvement, and other similar topics.



Assessment

In a short essay or journal entry, have students write their own stories, noting and describing the role that County government plays in their life. Ask them to reflect on whether private life and civic life are ever really separate.



Extensions

Assign students to identify which Fairfax County agency or other service provider has responsibility for each of the County government “contact points” in your story. (The *Fairfax County Citizens Handbook*) is a valuable resource for this assignment.

Sample Story: A Day in the Life of a Fairfax County Citizen

My Saturday was a hectic one. I got up early because I knew I had a lot to do, and took a shower. Breakfast was sausage, eggs, and coffee, and before long I was on my way. I noted before I left the house that Channel 16 announced an ozone alert. I would have to try and stay inside as much as I could.

My quick start was frustrated because I immediately ran into a monster traffic jam on Route 123. All the people in these new housing developments are really clogging the streets. To make matters worse, I tried to scoot through a stoplight a little too late and got a ticket for running a red light. What a morning, and I'd only just started!

My first errand was to drop off an overdue book at the library, and then I was on to the farmers' market by the K-Mart in Burke. The ozone didn't seem too bad, so I played a quick nine holes of golf at Burke Lake Park and by then, it was lunchtime. One of my students served me a couple gorditas at the Taco Bell.

Later that afternoon, I decided it was time to stop my daughter's whining and go pick up the cat she wanted to adopt from the shelter. She was one happy kid when she got home from her swimming lesson.

It rained in the late afternoon and then got much cooler. Perfect for the concert at Lake Accotink, and the end of a full day.

Government Contact Points (You can probably add others!)

- shower (Clean Water Act, Fairfax County Water Authority)
- sausage, eggs, coffee (FDA, tariffs on imports)
- Channel 16 ozone alert (National Weather Service, County-run cable channel, County Health Department)
- Route 123 (VDOT, County Department of Transportation)
- new housing developments (County planning and zoning issues, State highways)
- ticket (County police force, state and local traffic laws)
- library (Fairfax County has 19 libraries—the most of any County in the state)
- farmers' market (Fairfax County has 9 seasonal farmers' markets)
- Burke Lake Park (Fairfax County has more than 350 parks)
- Taco Bell (federal minimum wage, FDA, County health inspections)
- animal shelter (run by the County)
- swimming lesson (Fairfax County runs a variety of summer camps and programs)
- concert (offered during the summer at several County locations)