

Lesson Plan: Organization of Fairfax County Government

This lesson focuses on the organization of Fairfax County government including the Board of Supervisors, County Executive, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff, and Clerk of the Circuit Court.

NOTE: *The teacher should be cognizant of using current resources after any election changes.*

Connection to POS: Standard 8.1 and 8.2

- ◆ *Students will describe how individuals participate in the political process by... communicating with government officials, supporting and working with political parties and interest groups...and attending the meetings of governing bodies. (8.1.3.a)*
- ◆ *Students will explain how and why powers are distributed and shared between the national, state, and local governments in the federal system. (8.2.1.b)*
- ◆ *Students will explain the functions of, and the interactions between, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at each level (8.2.1.d)*
- ◆ *Students will be able to identify the elected officials who represent Fairfax County in the legislative and executive branches at the ...local level (8.2.1.e)*

SOL Standards: 7.1.a, 7.2.a, 7.2.b, 7.2.d, 7.3.a, 7.4.a, 7.4.b, 7.4.e, 7.5.a, 7.5.b, 7.9.a



Objectives

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

- ◆ identify Fairfax County government as a council-manager government, in which a part-time Board of Supervisors (legislative branch) sets broad policy and the County Executive (executive branch) implements policy by developing a yearly budget, recommending the appointment of senior civil servants, and overseeing the operation of government on a daily basis:
 - describe the term of office held by members of the Board of Supervisors and the districts they represent.
 - describe both how the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors is elected and the term and prerogatives of the office.
 - describe both how the County Executive is appointed and the length of term of office.
 - identify the current authority and responsibility of the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive.
- ◆ identify the three constitutional officers who are elected by and serve Fairfax County: sheriff, attorney for the Commonwealth, and clerk of the circuit court.
 - Describe the election process and term for each office.
 - Explain the responsibilities of each office.

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- ◆ identify the responsibilities of county governments to enact and enforce local ordinances.
- ◆ identify how citizens' views are represented in their community/district.



Materials

- ◆ Fairfax County Website <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/>
- ◆ Board of Supervisors homepage <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/gov/bos/homepage.htm>
- ◆ *Citizens Handbook* <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/handbook/main.htm>
- ◆ *An Introduction to the Board of Supervisors*. Middle school civics teachers should all have received a copy of this at the fall inservice. Much of the necessary information is also available online at the Board of Supervisors homepage listed above.
- ◆ Student worksheet [25 questions with answer key]



Time Needed

- ◆ Two 45 minutes periods or one 90 minute block



Procedures

1. As a pre-assessment, provide large index cards labeled with the offices on the organizational chart to students and have them manipulate the cards to create a flow chart of county government as they believe it would be organized based on individual titles/office names. Leave the cards on the board as they work during the lesson and have the students correct the chart at the end, working in teams.
2. The next activity should be introduced as an Internet Scavenger Hunt. Students should be given 30-45 minutes to complete the attached worksheet and "Who's Who" activities using one of the three internet sites listed above.
3. After completing as much as they can in the time allowed on the Internet, students should return to cooperative groups and work together to use print resources such as *An Introduction to the Board of Supervisors* and the *Citizen's Handbook* to fill in any remaining gaps.
4. Review answers as a class to ensure that each student has accurate information and have students correct organizational chart and check their answers against the enclosed chart.



Assessment

- ◆ Cooperative group report forms (enclosed)
- ◆ Flow chart activity (anecdotal records)
- ◆ Follow-up quiz: select 15 questions from worksheets and give students the choice to answer 10 of those 15 questions
- ◆ Projects/presentations as listed under extensions.



Extensions

- ◆ Reword the questions from the worksheet into a “Jeopardy” style quiz game. Categories could include
 - “Elected or Appointed?”
 - “Who Ya Gonna Call?”
 - “There Ought to be a Law...”
 - “Who’s Who?”



Differentiations

- ◆ Using presentation system software (as available,) show students the Fairfax County webpage on the classroom monitor. Demonstrate ways to navigate through the page and what types of information are available before students get to work on their own.
- ◆ Accelerated learners could be assigned the task of re-inventing government by “flattening” the organizational chart of Fairfax County government. Ask them to propose suggestions for combining offices, eliminating certain services, and hiring outside companies/contractors to perform certain functions.



Interdisciplinary Connections

- ◆ Students who are studying letter writing in English could be asked to write a Pen Pal letter to a real or imaginary friend in another city/town/county asking about their form of government and explaining how Fairfax County is organized.
- ◆ Students who are studying workplace writing could compile a resume on one of the following government officers: County executive, Commonwealth’s Attorney, or the Clerk of the Court.