

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- **Understand the framework of rules used in our national and state governments.**
- **Learn the process by which states are created and then become a part of the United States.**
- **Learn about the levels of local governments, their powers and responsibilities, and the extent of their jurisdiction.**
- **Learn about the methods of law enforcement, administration of justice, punishment of offenders, and the personnel involved in these activities.**
- **Understand that the rules by which people live change from time to time and from place to place.**

Materials:

1. Copies of the United States and state constitutions
2. Annual reports of governmental agencies
3. Lists of government offices in your area
4. Names and addresses of all local government officials
5. Newspapers, old and new
6. News magazines, old and new
7. History and civics books, old and new
8. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference books
9. World almanacs, old and new

Background:

When people live together in groups, some sort of system must be created to minimize disagreements and to settle disputes. In the United States this system was formed by the Constitution. After the original 13 states united, they provided for new states to join the young country by adopting their own constitutions.

Before Iowa could be admitted to the United States on December 28, 1846 the proposed state's draft constitution had to be

approved by the national government as well as by a vote of the people living in the territory. Provisions within that constitution allowed for the creation of counties, townships, and municipalities—including towns and cities—within the state. These levels of government made it easier to govern the individual, since the national government cannot legislate on purely local concerns.

As the population grew, additional units of local government were created to handle specific situations. Among these local units were districts that administered and financed schools, libraries, fire prevention, soil conservation, water conservation, and hospitals.

In the United States all systems of rules by which we live arise from its citizens. Citizens elect representatives to make and administer laws and to adjudicate disputes. We have law enforcement on all levels, including city police, county sheriffs, state militia, and the armed forces of the United States. These agencies protect citizens from outside dangers and also prevent injury and violence among citizens.

Procedure:

This thematic lesson plan is intended to introduce this particular topic to students. The activities are intended to introduce students to the process of inquiry that can be applied to the study Iowa history. In many cases the same activities can be used to explore the topic in a variety of Iowa history time periods. This lesson plan can also be used in conjunction with other topical areas in this curriculum.

These thematic lesson plans underscore basic skills such as reading, writing, communicating orally, and collecting reference sources. Many of the activities will give students practice in using higher skills as in reading, writing, communicating orally, collecting reference sources and using a library; distinguishing between primary and secondary sources; using charts and timelines; and developing vocabulary. The teacher can introduce higher level skills through these activities such as collecting information from a variety of sources through observation and questioning; compiling, organizing, and evaluating information; comparing and contrasting; drawing conclusions or inferences from evidence; considering alternative conclusions; making generalizations; recognizing points of view; understanding how things happen and how things change; recognizing how values and traditions influence history

and the present; grasping the complexities of cause and effect; developing a chronological sense; and understanding events in context.

Activities:

1. On a map of your state, fill in the boundaries and names of all of the counties.
2. On a map of your county, fill in the boundaries and names of all of the townships, towns, and cities.
3. On a map of your town, mark the location of all buildings connected with laws and law enforcement.
4. Write a report comparing the Constitution of the United States with the constitution of Iowa.
5. Visit the city hall and the county court house nearest your school. What offices and officers are located in each? What services are provided for citizens in each?
6. Attend a meeting of your city council and your board of supervisors.
7. Interview a judge, a police officer, and an attorney about their training and their work.
8. Research the constitutions of other states and other countries and list similarities and differences to those under which you live.
9. Read newspapers and other sources of information about the past, to find out what actions were illegal at other times in our history.
10. Discuss the controversies over different methods of punishments used for those people who break the law.
11. Discuss how laws sometimes restrict individual rights and actions in favor of the welfare of the whole community.
12. Make a chart of how a bill becomes a law in the Iowa government.
13. Make a chart of how a bill becomes a law in the federal government.
14. Make a list of services that are provided by governmental units and paid for by tax money.
15. Make a list of the types of tax revenue raised by each level of government.
16. Write a report on how individual citizens can influence making and changing laws.
17. Describe the reasons for and processes of amending constitutions.
18. Make a chart showing as many different forms of government as possible, and the ways in which each form achieves and maintains power.
19. Find illustrations of the uniforms and distinctive emblems and badges worn by people involved in making and enforcing laws.
20. Compare and contrast the role of the police and the armed forces in enforcing laws.
21. Students divide into teams and prepare debate materials on an issue currently being discussed by a state legislature or the United States Congress.
22. Write a report explaining the roles of the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches of government and how they check and balance each other.

Assessment of Outcomes:

1. Write a letter to a member of the United States Congress or the state legislature, expressing your opinion on a current issue.
2. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper expressing your opinion on a current issue.
3. Make a chart showing different forms of government, and where and when they have been practiced.
4. Create a model or draw a picture of a building in your area that is used for governmental purposes.
5. Make a photographic display of the buildings in your area used for governmental purposes.
6. Prepare a directory of government officials effect your life and explain what each of them does.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Most of the activities listed under procedures can be easily adapted to meet the learning needs of most students at various ages. Many of the listed activities can be used as art, music, writing, math, or science projects. Be sure to draw on teachers within your school and resource people in your community. The folklife section of this curriculum provides a list of community resource ideas.

Resources:

Contact the Iowa History Resource Center at the State Historical Society of Iowa for a list of books, videos, organizations and ideas for studying Iowa history. Write to: Education Coordinator, State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 East Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.