

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CONNECTICUT, 3rd EDITION

Instructor's Guide

This instructor's guide is designed to assist the instructor in stimulating class discussion and to bring to life the chapters in the book. This guide offers three different categories for the chapters:

Class Discussion

Class Assignment

Field Trips-Other Ideas

Class Discussion is based on the chapter reading, and is designed to stimulate a dialogue on the chapter contents. The regular use of these class discussion suggestions will be helpful in reminding students they have to stay current on the reading of the assigned chapters. Instructors can involve the students by breaking the class into teams that compete against one another, or just be listing on the board the answers they come up with. For example, in Chapter 21, Education, class discussion involves having the students identify all of the people involved in the school district, and in one way or another, are part of seeing that students receive an education-this list can be very long!

Class Assignments are geared more toward team and group activities, and can result in numerous debates and dialogue on different sides of topics. These assignments often will encourage the students to have discussions with their parents/guardians since the topics deal with real life issues. In some chapters, questions are asked to help lead discussions and then the teacher can determine what the interests of the class are and what assignments can then be made from these discussions.

Field Trips-Other Ideas provide suggestions for out of the classroom activities, but if this is not practical, these suggestions offer direction as to what organizations can be contacted and asked if they could send a representative to class. These field visits or representatives can bring to life the day to day issues that local governments face. Suggestions on whom to contact are identified, with specific references to various Appendices in the textbook.

Connecticut with its 169 municipalities and regional planning organizations have incredible resources to bring into the classroom, and for the most part, have employees that would love to share their work and experiences with students. This interaction will bring to life the readings, and hopefully, stimulate student interests to consider careers in local government. These career opportunities are spelled out in Chapter 30.

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Chapter 1

Class Discussion

1. What are some of the key difference in local government vs. federal and state government?
2. If town hall closed down, what services would be impacted? Create teams and see who can come up with the most on the list. Put list on board. Save list and review at the end of the entire segment on local government and compare to see how much they have learned about local government.
3. Where is the town hall located in the town students live in? Is it centralized?
4. How many have visited the town hall? Why? (dog license, parent/guardian paying taxes, building permit, other?)

Class Assignments

1. Assign students on their way home to observe and make a list of the town services they can identify. Ask them for the number they have identified, and then recognize students with the most. Put the list on the board as they call out the services and then check who missed what services.

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Chapter 2

Class Discussion

1. What are the three basic forms of government in Connecticut?
2. What form of government does your town have?
3. Can you identify who is the Mayor, or First Selectman, or Town Manager?
4. What is Home Rule? Why is it important?
5. Where is the State capitol located?
6. What makes a mayor strong? weak?
7. What is a town meeting?
8. How many towns and cities are there in Connecticut? Too few or too many?
9. What is the difference between a town and a city?

Class Assignments

1. Find out for next class who is the Mayor, First Selectman or Town Manager.
2. Is your town a charter or non-charter town?
3. Find out if there are any town meetings coming up in the next few months. What for?
4. Who is the chairman of the Board of Education?
5. Why did Connecticut abandon county government?
6. Prepare a list of Connecticut towns and cities that are based on Indian names.
7. Prepare a list of Connecticut's rivers that are based on Indian names.
8. Go on line (www.ct.gov/sots) or obtain a copy of the Blue Book and then look up your town officials.
9. Find out what year their town was incorporated . What other national events were going on in that time frame? Did your town precede the start of the US Government?

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Plan a trip to town hall and make prior arrangements with the Mayor, First Selectmen, or Town Manager.
- Plan a trip to the local police department. Depending upon the age of students, they love to see (and go inside) the local jail; find out how the prisoners obtain their meals.
- Invite local officials to class to talk about their jobs. Prepare ahead of time a list of questions on the town.

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Chapter 3

Class Discussion

1. What are some examples of titles of local elected and appointed officials?
2. Does your municipal government have all of the titles listed in this chapter? If not, why not?
3. Does your municipal government have all of the boards and commissions listed in this chapter? If not, why not? If you have more than those listed, why?
4. What is the difference between elected officials and appointed officials?
5. Which determines if the position is elected or appointed?
6. Who do you think should run your local government? Why?
7. Is there anyone that has ever contacted their local elected official? What for?

Class Assignments

1. Have the class identify the department managers in your municipality. Do you know the responsibilities of those department managers listed?
2. Has anyone ever gone to a local public meeting?
3. If you have contacted a local elected official, why did you?
4. Discuss some of the differences between the municipal government and the educational system.
5. Find out if your town government and board of educational work together on projects.
6. Discuss some of the joint projects that they have worked on in the past.
7. Have the class determine how easy or difficult it is to contact the elected and appointed officials using the municipal website.

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Call up your Municipal Clerk and find out who runs your city or town government.
- Check-out your city or town's website to look at its organization. Does it make sense?
- After reviewing the municipal website, invite the chief executive officer to class to discuss the website and ways to improve it.
- Visit the municipal public library and see if they have a copy of the municipal budget? Charter? Capital Improvement Plan? Ask the librarian if they know how often someone looks at it.
- Invite the chief executive officer to class to discuss ways the students think how the local government is being managed and way to improve it.

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Chapter 4

Class Discussion

1. What title does the person hold who is the chief executive officer of your city or town?
2. Are they elected or appointed?
3. What are the advantages of having an elected position hold this job?
4. What are the disadvantages of having an elected position hold this job?
5. What are the advantages of having an appointed person hold this job?
6. What are the disadvantages of having an appointed person hold this job?
7. What joint projects do you think the municipal and school government could work on?
8. Can you name any department manager in your community?
9. Can you name any of the elected officials in your community?
10. How many of you know the name of your chief elected or appointed official?

Class Assignments

1. If your city or town has a charter, find out when it was adopted and amended.
2. How do you get news and updated information about your city or town government?
3. Check out your city or town website. Does it provide you with a good overview of your municipal government?
4. Does it provide information on your Board of Education, or do they have a separate website?
5. Discuss what town official you would like to invite to the class. Is the class in agreement or are there several different opinions? Invite one or all of the positions discussed.
6. What would you consider to be the "essential" public services provided by your local government?

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Compare municipal websites in your area, and report on which one you think is the best.
- Invite the CEO and ask if your community jointly provides any public services with other neighboring cities or towns? What services could be shared?
- What common public services do you think should be shared between communities?

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Chapter 5

Class Discussion

1. Are local governments mentioned in our Federal Constitution?
2. What role does Connecticut's Constitution play in local government?
3. How are regional problems resolved in Connecticut?
4. What functions are carried out by the State Government?
5. What functions are carried out by local governments?
6. How do citizens influence local and state governments?

Class Assignments

1. Identify what year the municipality you live in was incorporated or founded. Is it younger or older than the United States?
2. What are the names of the eight counties in Connecticut and what are their functions?
3. Who represents your municipality in the State Legislature and what political party do they belong to?
4. Who determines the schedule for the school year in your municipality?
5. Who recruits and hires the snow plow driver in your Town or City?
6. Describe the highway numbering system used by the State of Connecticut. Odd numbered highways travel in which direction? Even numbered highways travel in which direction?

Field Trips and Other Ideas

- Invite a local public official (Mayor, Town Manager, First Selectman) to visit the class and tell the class what they do.
- Schedule a visit to the local town or city hall for a tour.
- Invite a local State Senator or State Representative to the class for a discussion about what they do, how they are elected, what political party they belong to and why, and what committees they may serve on in the legislature.
- Divide the class into two or more groups, give them a budget and a list of projects important to the community which different citizen groups support but would require either prioritization, or a major tax increase or both and see what each group decides and why they would do what they are recommending.
- Divide the class into three different groups local, regional and state and have them decide how certain government services should be delivered and why.

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Chapter 6

Class Discussion

1. Why is the charter process important? Explain why it is designed to take a long time with lots of input and hearings.
2. What are the political implications of having a special referendum vs. placing the charter revision on the normal November ballot? (Much harder to get approval on special election due to the 15% majority rule-thus a person could publically state they are in favor of the charter change, but because they are secretly against it, vote to put it on a special ballot and not the regular election when it only takes a simple majority vote)

Class Assignments

1. Determine if the town where students live is a charter town and what form of government it is?
2. If charter town, when was the charter adopted? Has it been amended?
3. If not a charter town, interview selectmen on their thoughts of operating under the general statutes. Advantages? Disadvantages?
4. Are any towns in the area planning on revising their charter? Why?
5. Locate the Council-Manager towns on a map (See Appendix) and determine what part of the State they are located in. Have discussion as to why they are grouped in one particular section of the State?

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Contact the Secretary of State's office to see how many towns have changed their charter in the last few years.
- Invite to class a representative from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) in New Haven to speak about the process and the importance of self-governance.

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Chapter 7

Class Discussion

1. What is a Union? Why do we have Unions?
2. What are the three major pieces of legislation effecting public employees and their employers in Connecticut?
3. What are negotiation, mediation and arbitration?
4. What are some of the major issues between public employees and the municipalities of the state and the State of Connecticut itself?

Class Assignments

1. What collective bargaining union represents the teachers in your school?
2. How is the President of your teacher's collective bargaining union selected?
3. What other collective bargaining unions are in your municipality?
4. What happened when the last contract agreement between the teacher's collective bargaining union and the Board of Education was negotiated in your town/city?
5. What is a "right-to-work" state?
6. Where are labor relations activities and responsibilities outlined in Connecticut?
7. What is meant by the term "bargaining in good faith"? What is a grievance?
8. What percentage of the municipal budget of your town is subject to the collective bargaining process?

Field Trips- Other Ideas

- Invite the President of a local bargaining unit to speak to a class about how they perceive the role of unions in the work place. What are the issues they deal with, what types of grievances occur and how are they resolved.
- Invite the employer representative to the class and ask the same questions.
- Invite a State mediator to class and have them outline the most difficult issues they have had to deal with between employer and employees.
- Divide the class into groups of twos, representing the employer and representing the employees and provide each group of two with an issue that they can debate. Have them select a bargaining committee representing the employees and one representing the employer. Have them set "ground rules" as to how the negotiating process should take place. If they can't reach agreement, have students assume the role of State appointed mediators to try and work out a compromise. Have the respective employer/employee groups caucus. Create an arbitration panel and have presentations made before the arbitration panel. Have the arbitration panel make a decision and tell why they made the decision.
- Get a copy of a collective bargaining agreement and make copies for the class. Have them analyze the agreement and explain what the various provisions are for.

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Chapter 8

Class Discussion

1. What are the main powers given to the states by the federal government?
2. Why do you think the federal government prefers to provide grants to states, rather than local governments?
3. Briefly explain the powers granted to our federal government?
4. Briefly explain the powers granted to our state governments?
5. Why do the powers of local governments vary from state to state?
6. Can you think of any items that you purchase that have both federal and state taxes applied to them? (gasoline, diesel fuel) .
7. Name the three primary types of federal grants?
8. Highlight and describe the differences between these federal grant programs?
9. How has "federalism" changed over the years?
10. Is "federalism" different now than a decade ago?

Class Assignments (Teams can be assigned and compete against one another)

1. What types of federal grants does your state received from the federal government?
2. Find out if your school district receives any federal grant funds? If so, which ones?
3. Find out if your city or town receives any federal grant funds? If so, which ones?
4. Find out if your school district receives any state grant funds? If so, which ones?
5. Find out if your city or town receives any state grant funds? If so, which ones?
6. Name the last two states that were added to the United States of America? Debate whether Puerto Rico should become the 51st state.
7. Why do you think special districts are the fastest growing form of local government?
8. Are there any special districts that provided public service in your community? (sewer, water, trash disposal)

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Check with your elected or appointed officials, and ask them if your local government officials ever meet with their elected state representative. If so, what did they discuss?
- Check with your school elected or appointed officials, and ask them if your school officials ever meet with their elected state representatives. Is so, what did they discuss?
- Invite a federal representative or his/her staff person and ask them to talk about the federal government's role in local government.

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Chapter 9

Class Discussion

1. How long are the terms of office for the top elected officials in the students' town? If there is a town manager, how long has he or she been there?
2. What are Robert Rules of Order? Why are they important in running meetings? What would happen if there were no rules of procedure?

Class Assignments

1. What is the ruling political party in the students' town? Does it change that often? Is it the same political party for the Board of Education?
2. Invite the chief executive officer (Mayor, First Selectman, Town Manager) to class to talk about the political process of elections, length of time in office, should there be term limits, and what governs the procedures of the meetings?
3. Obtain a copy of Roberts Rules of order and have students prepare a paper on basics of running a meeting, i.e. who calls meeting to order, agenda, who has right to speak, how to make a motion, how to amend a motion, how to stop debate, number of votes needed to stop discussion, etc. This is a good background for the class project below.

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Have a class election to form a town council and then have students come up with ideas on some items they have to vote on. Have other students be in favor and against the proposals before the council and how they will be given the opportunity to speak on the proposal. Have one student be the press reporter so he/she can give an objective report on the process that took place. This can take a few classes, but it does get the students really involved. Try and incorporate Roberts Rules of Order into the proceedings (there are condensed versions available). This exercise can take up several classes.

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Chapter 10

Class Discussion

1. Why is the local budget important? What are some important items in the local budget?
2. How long does the budget process take? Why does it take so long? Can it be shortened up?
3. A house has a market value of \$300,000 (or any number) what is the assessed value of the house? If the mill rate is 30 mills, how much are the taxes?
4. Are the property taxes in town too high? Why or why not?

Class Assignments

1. Have students ask their parents/guardians if they have ever attended a budget meeting, and if so, on what topic? Did they speak at the meeting?
2. Have students ask their parents/guardians if they think local property taxes are too high. If yes, then what do they think should be cut.
3. Have students think about what car they want to buy, and then calculate the property taxes they have to pay on it. Also, have them calculate the sales tax on it.
4. What months are property taxes collected? (July, January). Have the students find out if this money is then invested since all of it is not needed right away.

Field Trips-Other Ideas

- Have students attend a budget meeting-public hearing, town meeting on the local budget and write a report on the type of meeting, number of people, tone of the meeting, and any observations on it. (good assignment in the spring)
- Invite CEO to class and have them speak on importance of the budget and what do they see as the major budgetary item coming up.
- Have some students interview the CEO on the budget and what the CEO wants to get done.