

Function and Structure

Trustee: Terrence Fontaine
Subject: Government, Civic Education
Topic: Structure of Government
Grade Level: 9-12
Time: 45 minutes

[View how this lesson plan fits state standards](#)

[View the video](#)



Materials:

- Computer with Internet access, external speakers, and a LCD projector OR access to a computer lab with Internet access and headphones for each student
- Updated Media Player recommended. [Download QuickTime](#). Problems playing? [Check our Media Help page](#).
- Student worksheets ([Word](#), [PDF](#))
- Download Lesson Plan ([Word](#), [PDF](#))

Learning Objectives:

Students will

1. learn about the structure and function of government;
2. build a list of local government functions and;
3. define council-manager system, strong and weak-mayor system, and the commission system.

INTRODUCTION AND WARM-UP (20 minutes)

1. Before showing the video to the class, ask students to jot down everything that they know about the structure and function of local government on the Student Handout (t-chart).
2. Ask students to share their notes with one another.
3. Tell the students that they are going to view a short documentary about Terrence Fontaine, a man who works as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Houston Mayor Bill White. As students watch the film, ask them to add additional observations about the structure and function of government to their t-chart and check off things that they've already noted. Access the Terrence Fontaine episode at www.americantrusteesproject.org. If you have difficulties accessing the videos, please visit our [Media Help page](#). Show the video to the students on individual computers or project it onto a screen in the classroom from a computer.

APPLICATION (25 minutes)

1. As a class, watch the brief Bernard Rapoport video, which can be accessed online at www.americantrusteesproject.org. Pass out a copy of the "Texas Local Government Code" and a copy of your city's Organization chart. Both can be found online.
1. Again using their t-chart: ask the students to keep adding and checking off additional observations about the structure and functions of local government.

For example, the "Texas Local Government Code" might help students to see that cities have some authority over jails.

2. Invite your students to share their new observations with a partner briefly and then share out as a whole group. Ask students what they added and what they noticed about the functions overall?
3. Now turning toward structure. Handout a figure of the *Common Forms of Municipal Government*. Typically these charts can be found in an American Government Textbook or in "The Essentials for Texas Politics."
4. Again, ask students to add to their t-chart.
5. Ask the students to keep adding to their existing knowledge about local government and checking off additional observations about the structure government. For example, the *Common Forms of Municipal Government* might help students to see that mayors do not all have the same level of influence.
6. Now share with students that they are going to view a short documentary about Annette Strauss, a former Mayor of Dallas, Texas. As students watch the film, ask them to add additional observations about the structure and function of government to their t-chart and check off things that they've already noted. Access the Annette Strauss episode at www.americantrusteesproject.org. Show the video to the students on individual computers or project it onto a screen in the classroom from a computer.
7. Again, as a class share additional observations about the structure of government.
8. Ask your students to reflect back to the Annette Strauss episode and have them describe how Annette challenged the structure of local government. What did it take?

CONCLUSION (10 minutes)

1. Distribute an exit slip: Ask students to share two things that they learned during the lesson. For a bonus you may ask them to reflect about how their understanding has changed, if at all?

ASSESSMENT

The students are assessed on:

1. t-chart
2. exit slip
3. class participation