Who Runs the City?

Objectives

Students will:
- Recognize the City & County Building as headquarters for Salt Lake City government.
- Locate the mayor's and council offices by examining a floor plan of the City and County Building.
- Experience the mayor/council system through a mock city government demonstration.

Student Instruction

1. Ask students about the government of the United States. Where is the nation’s capitol? What building are all the laws for the country made in? Who leads the national government?

2. Explain: Salt Lake City has government leaders too. The “Congress” for Salt Lake City is called the city council. The “President” of the city is called the mayor. And just as the United States has a capitol building where laws for the country are made, Salt Lake City has a city hall where laws for the city are made. We’ll be seeing the headquarters of Salt Lake City government on our tour of the City and County Building.

3. Pass out copies of the City and County Building Third Floor Plan. Ask students to locate the offices of the mayor and the council, the mayor's conference room, and the council chambers.

Student Activity

1. Students will create a mock city government to help them understand how the government works. Pass out the City Government Leader Job Descriptions Handout. Review the responsibilities of the mayor and city council members with students.

2. Ask students to brainstorm the qualities they think a city official should have.

3. Encourage students to run for office. Each candidate will make a short “campaign speech.” Students will vote for a mayor and five council members.
4. Council members sit facing the class at the front of the room. Ask student “citizens” to present ideas for classroom “laws” to the council. Speakers will stand before the council, mention a class problem, and suggest a new rule. Other students may speak in favor of or against the proposal.

5. The council will briefly discuss the proposal and vote to adopt or reject it. The council may consider several proposals, as time allows.

6. If the rule is approved, the mayor assigns a committee to make sure that the rule is enforced. (Example: A student complains that chairs are not pushed in and that this creates a hazard. The council votes that all chairs must be pushed in before recess. The mayor appoints someone to make sure that all chairs are pushed in.)

7. If students live in Salt Lake City, ask them to find out who the mayor and their council representative is. If students live outside the city, ask them to find out how their local government works and identify key officials.

Extensions

City Government

Students will brainstorm the services needed to run a city to better understand how the city meets its needs. Compare lists to the city departments found in the phone book under the blue pages in the “Salt Lake City Government” section.

Students living outside Salt Lake City could identify their own form of local government and compare it to Salt Lake City’s government.

Communication, Interview skills

Students may identify their council member and interview him/her regarding neighborhood issues.

Careers

Students might discuss jobs within the city as possible career choices.

Resources

For additional information of Salt Lake City government, order User Friendly Government for Young Citizens from the Salt Lake School District Education Foundation by calling (801) 578-8212.
Diagram: City & County Building Third Floor Plan

Key

- 304  Council Office
- 315  Council Chambers
- 325  Council Members' Offices
- 326  Council Conference Room
- 306  Mayor's Office
- 336  Mayor's Staff
- 338  Mayor's Conference Room
City Government Leader Job Descriptions

The City Council

Just as the Congress makes all the laws for the United States, the city council makes all the laws for Salt Lake City. The city council has seven members. Each member represents a different part of the city, called a district. The council members are elected by the people who live in their districts.

The city council meets in the Council Chambers at the City and County Building twice each month to discuss ideas for new laws. Citizens can come to these meetings, too. Citizens can tell the council about a problem in their neighborhood, suggest a new law, or speak for or against a law the council is discussing.

Once the city council has heard citizens’ opinions on an idea for a new law, it votes to approve the law or reject it. If the law is approved, everyone in Salt Lake City must obey it.

The Mayor

The mayor is like the President of Salt Lake City. He or she is elected by all the citizens of the city. The mayor’s job is to put into action the laws passed by the city council. Many city departments help the mayor with this job. For example, if the council passes a new traffic law, the mayor instructs the police department to enforce it.

The mayor also makes sure the city government provides services to keep citizens safe and healthy. Again, many city departments help with this job. For example, the water department brings clean water to all buildings in the city. The sanitation department picks up trash and recycling each week.

The mayor oversees all city departments. If citizens have problems with their city services, they can go to the mayor for help.