

Local-democracy Citizenship teacher's resource :

Using Councillor Quest II as part of Citizenship classes

Overview

- Key Stage 3
- Subject: citizenship
- Unit: local Democracy
- Special requirements: Computers and internet (or Demgames CD-ROM)

Introduction

Councillor Quest II is a computer game developed as part of the UK government's Local e-Democracy National Project in order to help teach citizenship in a fun interactive way. The basic premise of the game is that players are put in the position of a councillor for the day and have to complete various tasks throughout the day.

The idea of the game is to help young people understand the role of councillors in every day life, and give them a flavour of the kind of decisions they have to make. The different kinds of tasks included in the game are: dealing with mobile phone theft in the local bus station, sorting out problems with a local night club, and addressing issues at the local school.

This teaching activity is designed to help teachers effectively integrate the Councillor Quest II game into a citizenship lesson.

Learning objectives

By taking part in this activity, the pupils should learn about:

- the role councillors play in local democracy
- the dilemmas and issues of councillors' everyday life
- the kinds of skills and personal values makes a good councillor

Activity overview

This citizenship activity has been designed to help pupils explore the different areas of life local Councils are involved in, and the diverse role councillors play in every day life.

The idea is for this activity to run in the first half of a citizenship lesson. The second half of the lesson should involve getting the pupils to play the Councillor Quest II game.

Activity detail

This teaching activity is broken into three sections:

1. Perceptions and realities: what do you think about councillors? What kind of qualities and skills do you think they need?
2. You're a councillor for the day: make decisions and see the consequences.
3. Have a go at being a virtual councillor for the day!

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Activity 1: Perceptions and realities

- a) In groups, ask your pupils to start to discuss what they think about councillors. On a large piece of paper, get them to write down ten adjectives which they think most accurately describes a councillor.
- b) Having done this initial group brainstorm, now get your pupils to think in a bit more depth about what kind of qualities and skills they need to do their jobs. **For example:** *listening skills, communication skills, debating skills*. This activity should be done by initially getting each of your class to write down on a piece of paper one core skill they think is important for a councillor to have. You should then ask them to hold their piece of paper above their head and read it out whilst you write it down on the class board. Having written down these words, you should then open up the discussion to the class, asking your pupils to discuss which skills and qualities are most important.

In doing this you should perhaps give a few examples of the different tasks a councillor has to do in their daily lives: for example speak to the media, make decisions on contentious local issues, attend Council meetings and debates.

If you want to extend this activity, you could get your pupils to actively research what councillors do either by using the internet, or interviewing a councillor. You could even ask a local councillor to come in to the class to talk to your class.

Activity 2: You're a councillor for the day

Organise your class into groups of five, and get them to pretend to be councillors for the day. The main task in pretending to a councillor for a day is for them to consider how to deal with three tasks:

- a) **School traffic problem:** there have been complaints about school children being in danger of being run over at the local school. What do you do to try to solve this problem and ensure people don't lose their lives?
- b) **An interview with the local paper:** how do you approach the interview? Do you answer all the questions directly? How do you balance your personal views with those of your constituents and those of your party?
- c) **What role would you play in this debate?** How would you develop your positions on issues, would you consult the public? How do you balance the needs for increased spending against increasing tax?

Having completed this task, as a whole group discuss the issues that you encountered when considering life as a councillor. What were the positives and negatives? Ask the class whether they would like to be councillors. Why is this?

Activity 3: Virtual councillor

Having got your class to think about the practicalities of being a councillor, now get your class to fill the virtual shoes of a local councillor for the day by playing Councillor Quest II. Visit: <http://www.demgames.org> to play the games on the internet. The games are also available on CD-ROM.