LOCAL GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Teacher's Guide

NORTH DAKOTA SECRETARY OF STATE

GRADE LEVEL

9 - 12

DURATION

1 class period (50 minutes)

SUMMARY

This lesson introduces students to local government and elections in North Dakota. Students explore the types of local governments that serve their communities, the officials elected to represent them, and the issues that may appear on local ballots. Through relatable examples and activities, students examine how local decisions affect everyday life and learn ways citizens can participate in local government both during and between elections.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify types of local government
- Identify local offices and ballot issues
- Explain how local government decisions affect communities
- Describe ways to participate beyond voting

MATERIALS

- Local Government & Elections PowerPoint
- Local Government: Who Handles It?
- Ballot Detective
- Exit Ticket
- At Home Reflection Activities

NORTH DAKOTA STATE STANDARDS

This lesson is aligned with the following 6-12 Civics and Government standards:

C.6_12.4 ***Investigate the role and responsibilities of citizenship in society.***

Students explore how local government affects their communities and the role citizens play in local decision-making. They identify ways to participate beyond voting.

C.6_12.4.1 ***Explain how citizens can influence government.***

Students learn how citizens can influence local government through voting, attending meetings, contacting officials, volunteering, serving on boards, or running for office.

C.6_12.4.3 ***Explain how citizens' personal and civic responsibilities are important to the preservation and improvement of United States constitutional republic.***

Students consider the importance of staying informed about local government and community issues and how civic participation contributes to local decision-making.

C.6_12.4.5 ***Demonstrate active participation in civic life.***

Students apply their understanding of local government through community-focused activities and identify ways to participate beyond voting.

C.6_12.2 ***Analyze the structures and functions of governments.***

Students examine how local governments are structured and how local offices, elections, and ballot issues shape community decisions.

C.6_12.2.5 ***Explain the purpose, organization, powers, and processes of tribal and local governments.***

Students identify different types of local government and learn how they provide services and make decisions that affect their communities.

STEP-BY STEP INSTRUCTION

Opening
0-2 minutes

Tell the class: "*Think about everything that happened before you got to this classroom today. You drove on a street. You passed a park. You came into a school building. Maybe you saw a police officer, a construction project, or a road being repaired. Who makes decisions about all of those things?"* Give students 20-30 seconds to shout out answers.

"Many of the decisions that affect your daily life aren't made in Washington, D.C., or at the State Capitol. They're made closer to home. Local governments make many of these decisions, and voters choose those leaders."

Slide 1
2-3 minutes

Display slide one and introduce the lesson, **Local Government & Elections.**

Slide 2
3-4 minutes

Read the four "I can" statements out loud and tell students they will revisit these at the end of class.

Slide 3
4-6 minutes

Ask the class, *"What does it actually mean when we say* **local government***?"* Give students time to discuss.

"When we say local government, we're actually talking about several different types of government.

Every North Dakotan lives in a county. Depending on where you live, you may also live in a city or township. You live within a school district, and your community may also have a park district. That means more than one local government may serve you."

Slide 4
6-8 minutes

"Who knows what county we are in?" Give students a chance to answer. "*We are in ____, one of the 53 counties in ND.*

County governments *serve both communities and rural areas. They maintain county roads, manage property records and taxes, and provide a variety of public services.*

Voters elect county commissioners to make decisions about county services.

Counties also play an important role in elections. County auditors work with the Secretary of State's office to administer elections locally.

Slide 5
8-9 minutes

"If you live in a city, you are also served by **city government.** *Think about the things it takes to operate a community every day: streets, water, public safety, planning, development, and city services.*

For example, city government may make decisions about new developments, roads, or decide how land can be used.

Just like at the county level, citizens elect local officials to make these decisions. Depending on how the city is organized, voters may elect a mayor, city council members, or city commissioners.

ND also has organized townships, especially in rural areas. Township governments may be responsible for things such as township roads and other local needs. Voters in organized townships elect officials to make those decisions."

Slide 6
9-11 minutes

"What is a local government that every student in this room already interacts with?

School districts *make decisions about schools and facilities, budgets, district policies, and educational priorities.*

School boards govern these districts, and their members are elected by voters. This gives local voters a direct role in choosing who helps lead their schools."

Question: *"Can you think of a school issue that students might care enough about to bring to their school board?"*

Slide 7
11-13 minutes

"Another local government you may interact with is your **park district***.*

Park districts provide and maintain many of the places and programs people use for recreation: parks, playgrounds, trails, pools, and sports facilities.

Park districts are governed by park boards. Members are elected by local voters."

Slide 8
13-19 minutes

Local Government: Who Handles It breakout activity. Tell students, *"Turn to the person next to you. For each situation, decide which local government you would contact first. You have a few minutes."*

Give students time to discuss, then reveal the answers one at a time.

"When I gave you the directions, I asked who you would contact first. That's because government responsibilities can overlap. Part of being an informed citizen is figuring out which government has jurisdiction over the issue you care about. Knowing who makes a decision helps you know where to start."

Slide 9
19-21 minutes

"Now let's put everything together.

You don't belong to just one local government. You live in a county. You may live in a city or township. You live in a school district. And your community may have a park district. Each has its own responsibilities, boundaries, leaders, and decisions.

Many of the people leading these local governments are chosen by voters.

So when someone says, 'local elections,' they aren't talking about one election or one office. They're talking about the different ways voters help choose the people making decisions close to home."

Slide 10
21-23 minutes

"Something not all voters realize is that elections happen at different times.

In North Dakota, local elections may be held along with statewide elections or at a different time.

City, township, and school elections, for example, may have different election dates.

Being an informed voter means knowing when elections are happening in your community, not just when there's a presidential election."

Question: *"Where can you go to find dates for upcoming elections?"*

Answer: Your county auditor or the North Dakota Secretary of State's website.

Slide 11
23-25 minutes

"Knowing when an election is happening is an important first step. But once you know there's an election coming up, there's another question: What will I actually be voting on?

Not every voter sees exactly the same races and questions. What appears on your ballot depends on where you live and the jurisdictions that serve you.

That brings us back to something we talked about earlier.

You live in a county, a school district, and possibly a city or township and a park district. Those different local governments can affect what appears on your ballot."

Slide 12
25-33 minutes

"One of the best ways to know what to expect before Election Day is to look at a sample ballot.

Let's take a closer look at how a North Dakota ballot is organized.

First, it's important to know whether you're looking at a primary or general election ballot.

A primary election helps determine which candidates move on to the general election. In North Dakota's primary, voters choose one political party's section for partisan races.

In a general election, voters can choose candidates from different political parties in different races.

North Dakota ballots are also divided into sections. Partisan races include federal, legislative, and statewide races.

The no-party section includes county, city, school, and other nonpartisan races.

Ballot measures have their own section.

For many local offices, you're evaluating individual candidates without political party labels. Some local races are final in the Primary Election.

Now let's put this into practice by investigating a sample North Dakota primary ballot." Hand out the ***Ballot Detective breakout activity.***

Slide 13
33-35 minutes

"Local elections aren't only about choosing people. Sometimes voters are asked to make a decision directly through a ballot measure.

Instead of asking, 'Which candidate should represent us?' voters are asked, 'Should this proposal be approved?'

Ballot measures happen at different levels of government. Some measures are statewide, which means voters across North Dakota are asked to decide the same question. Others are local, which means only voters in a particular city, county, school district, or other jurisdiction vote on that question.

So just like candidate races, the measures you see on your ballot depend on where you live."

Slide 14
35-41 minutes

"Whether voters are deciding an issue directly through a ballot measure or electing officials to make decisions on their behalf, local government often comes down to making choices.

Let's see what happens when we have to make one of those choices.

Imagine your community has enough money for one major project. Which would you choose?" Read the choices on the slide and take a vote.

"Now tell the person next to you why you made that choice."

After discussion: *"Did everyone agree?"* Students likely respond no. *"Probably not, and that's part of local government."*

"Communities have limited resources and many competing priorities. People can agree that all four ideas are worthwhile and still disagree about which one should come first.

Local elected officials make decisions like this, and voters choose those officials."

Slide 15
41-43 minutes

"What can citizens do if they care about these decisions? Voting is one way to have a say - but it's not the only way.

You can learn about local issues, attend public meetings, contact local officials, volunteer, serve on boards or committees when eligible, and even run for office.

And you don't have to wait until you're eligible to vote to get involved. You can start by paying attention to what's happening in your community and learning how to make your voice heard."

Slide 16
43-50 minutes

Recap and read the questions on the slide without answering them. Hand out ***Exit Tickets*** Have students fill out their exit ticket and hand it in on the way out of class.

Let students choose an at home reflection activity to complete:
-Your Local Government Profile
-What's Happening Here
-Civics in Action

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This guide is designed to support educators in facilitating the ***Local Government & Elections*** lesson. It includes suggested talking points, low-prep interactive activities, discussion questions, and reflection prompts that align with each slide in the presentation.

Additional resources, including official North Dakota Secretary of State materials, are provided to further explore the themes of democracy, civic participation, elections, and informed voting.

Suggested Websites

www.vote.nd.gov

- Official source for North Dakota election information.

www.nlc.org

- Explains municipal government structures, officials, powers, and how local governments differ across the country.

www.usa.gov

- Information about elections and how local government structures vary across communities

Suggested Videos

North Dakota Secretary of State - Elections 101

Series of videos for North Dakota voters. All videos under 2 minutes.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT *Who Handles it?*

With a partner, read each situation and decide which local government you would contact first. Write your answer. Some responsibilities may overlap.

YOUR CHOICES: COUNTY | CITY/TOWNSHIP | SCHOOL DISTRICT | PARK DISTRICT

_____

1. The road outside your house has a huge pothole.

2. Your school is considering changing its graduation requirements.

3. You have a question about property records for a piece of land.

4. A neighborhood wants improvements made to a city park.

5. Someone wants to get a marriage license.

6. Your community is considering building a new public swimming pool.

7. You want to know where your polling place is.

8. A family wants to know where their child will attend public school.

Your Turn

What is one question you would ask a local elected official?

ANSWER KEY

With a partner, read each situation and decide which local government you would contact first. Write your answer. Some responsibilities may overlap.

YOUR CHOICES: COUNTY | CITY/TOWNSHIP | SCHOOL DISTRICT | PARK DISTRICT

_____

1. The road outside your house has a huge pothole.
   City, county, or township, depending on who maintains the road

2. Your school is considering changing its graduation requirements.
   School District

3. You have a question about property records for a piece of land.
   County

4. A neighborhood wants improvements made to a city park.
   City or park district, depending on the community

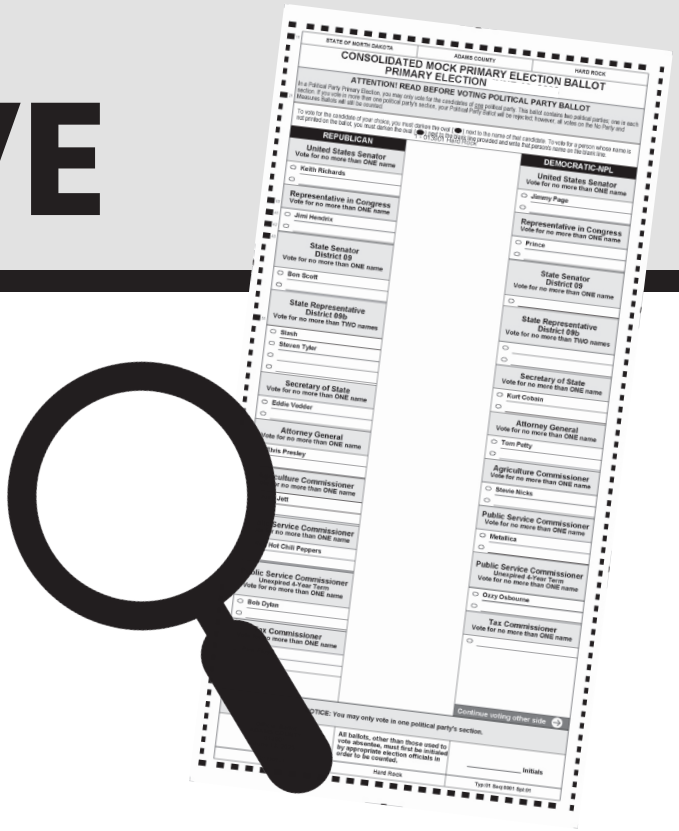
5. Someone wants to get a marriage license.
   County

6. Your community is considering building a new public swimming pool.
   City or park district, depending on the community

7. You want to know where your polling place is.
   County - The county auditor is a key local election official in North Dakota

8. A family wants to know where their child will attend public school.
   School District

BALLOT DETECTIVE



Use the mock North Dakota ballot to investigate how a ballot is organized. You do not need to vote or choose any candidates. Your job is to find the evidence.

1. What county is this ballot for?

2. Is this a primary or general election ballot?

3. According to the ballot instructions, can a voter vote in both political party sections?

4. What is the title of the section on the back side of the ballot?

5. Find one office where voters may select more than one candidate.

6. What are three county offices listed on the ballot?

7. Do county candidates have party labels next to their names?

8. What happens if you vote in both political party sections?

9. Do you have to vote for everything on the ballot for your ballot to be accepted?

10. Why does this primary ballot have separate political party sections? How would a general election ballot be different?

Answer Key

1. What county is this ballot for?
   Adams County

2. Is this a primary or general election ballot?
   Primary Election

3. According to the ballot instructions, can a voter vote in both political party sections?
   No. A voter may vote for candidates in only one political party's section.

4. What is the title of the section on the back side of the ballot?
   No-Party Primary Ballot

5. Find one office where voters may select more than one candidate.
   State Representative, District 09b

6. What are three county offices listed on the ballot?
   Any three of the following: County Commissioner at Large, County Auditor/Treasurer, County State's Attorney, County Recorder, or County Sheriff.

7. Do county candidates have party labels next to their names?
   No

8. What happens if you vote in both political party sections?
   **The Political Party section will not be counted,
   but votes on the No-Party and Measures ballots will still be counted.**

9. Do you have to vote for everything on the ballot for your ballot to be accepted?
   No. A voter may leave a race blank. The other valid votes on the ballot will still be counted.

10. Why does this primary ballot have separate political party sections?
    How would a general election ballot be different?
    **On a ND primary ballot, voters may vote in only one political party's section.
    A general election is different: candidates who advanced from the primary appear on the general election ballot, and voters may choose candidates from different parties.**

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA	ADAMS COUNTY	HARD ROCK

CONSOLIDATED MOCK PRIMARY ELECTION BALLOT
PRIMARY ELECTION JUNE 11, 2024

ATTENTION! READ BEFORE VOTING POLITICAL PARTY BALLOT

In a Political Party Primary Election, you may only vote for the candidates of one political party. This ballot contains two political parties; one in each section. If you vote in more than one political party's section, your Political Party Ballot will be rejected; however, all votes on the No Party and Measures Ballots will still be counted.

To vote for the candidate of your choice, you must darken the oval (⬬) next to the name of that candidate. To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, you must darken the oval (⬬) next to the blank line provided and write that person's name on the blank line.

1 - 013901 Hard Rock

REPUBLICAN

United States Senator
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Keith Richards
- ○ _____

Representative in Congress
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Jimi Hendrix
- ○ _____

State Senator District 09
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Bon Scott
- ○ _____

State Representative District 09b
Vote for no more than TWO names

- ○ Slash
- ○ Steven Tyler
- ○ _____
- ○ _____

Secretary of State
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Eddie Vedder
- ○ _____

Attorney General
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Elvis Presley
- ○ _____

Agriculture Commissioner
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Joan Jett
- ○ _____

Public Service Commissioner
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Red Hot Chili Peppers
- ○ _____

Public Service Commissioner
Unexpired 4-Year Term
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Bob Dylan
- ○ _____

Tax Commissioner
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Pink Floyd
- ○ _____

DEMOCRATIC-NPL

United States Senator
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Jimmy Page
- ○ _____

Representative in Congress
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Prince
- ○ _____

State Senator District 09
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ _____

State Representative District 09b
Vote for no more than TWO names

- ○ _____
- ○ _____

Secretary of State
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Kurt Cobain
- ○ _____

Attorney General
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Tom Petty
- ○ _____

Agriculture Commissioner
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Stevie Nicks
- ○ _____

Public Service Commissioner
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Metallica
- ○ _____

Public Service Commissioner
Unexpired 4-Year Term
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ Ozzy Osbourne
- ○ _____

Tax Commissioner
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ○ _____

Continue voting other side

NOTICE: You may only vote in one political party's section.

Official Ballot ADAMS COUNTY 013901 June 11, 2024	All ballots, other than those used to vote absentee, must first be initialed by appropriate election officials in order to be counted.	_____ Initials
01390101	Hard Rock	Typ:01 Seq:0001 Spl:01

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA	ADAMS COUNTY	HARD ROCK

NO-PARTY PRIMARY BALLOT

To vote for the candidate of your choice, you must darken the oval (⬬) next to the name of that candidate.

To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, you must darken the oval (⬬) next to the blank line provided and write that person's name on the blank line.

Justice of the Supreme Court
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ Creedence Clearwater Revival
- ⬭ _____

Judge of the District Court No. 2 Southwest Judicial District
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ Fleetwood Mac
- ⬭ _____

Judge of the District Court No. 4 Southwest Judicial District
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ David Bowie
- ⬭ _____

County Commissioner at Large
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ Brian May
- ⬭ Freddie Mercury
- ⬭ _____

County Auditor/Treasurer
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ Elton John
- ⬭ _____

County State's Attorney
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ The Eagles
- ⬭ _____

County Recorder
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ The Beatles
- ⬭ _____

County Sheriff
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ Lynyrd Skynyrd
- ⬭ _____

County Official Newspaper
Vote for no more than ONE name

- ⬭ The Doors

VOTE BOTH SIDES

01390101	Hard Rock	Typ:01 Seq:0001 Spl:01

NAME DATE

EXIT ticket

Local Government & Elections

Reflection

01. Name one type of local government and give one example of a decision it may make.

02. Why might two North Dakota voters see different races or measures on their ballots?

03. What is one way you can participate in local government besides voting?

Rate Your Understanding

1 Not Yet 2 Somewhat 3 Confident

- I can identify different types of local government.
- I can identify local offices and ballot issues.
- I can explain how local government decisions affect communities.
- I can describe ways people can participate in local government beyond voting.

Look Ahead

What is one local issue or decision you would like to know more about in your community?

REFLECTION

Local Government & Elections

Today's lesson explored how local governments affect your community, how local elections work, and how people can participate.

Choose ONE of the three options below. Your work should demonstrate thoughtful reflection and include ideas or examples from today's lesson.

Build Your Local Government Profile

Find out who actually represents you. Research and identify:

- Your county, your city or township, your school district, your park district.
- Two local elected officials who represent your area.
- The date of one upcoming local government meeting or election.
- One issue, project, or decision you found while looking.

Requirements: Answer all the questions in complete sentences. Include a 3-5 sentence reflection explaining one thing you learned or found surprising and why knowing about your local government could be useful. List the websites or sources you used.

What's Happening Here?

Find one issue, project, proposal, or decision currently being discussed in your community. Look at a local government website, meeting agenda, local news source, school district communication, or another reliable source. Answer:

- What is the issue or decision and which local government is involved?
- Who has the authority to make the decision and who might be affected?
- What are two different viewpoints or priorities people might have?
- Besides voting, how could a person make their opinion known?

Requirements: Answer all the questions in complete sentences. List the sources you used.

Civics in Action

Local government decisions affect your community, and voting isn't the only way people can participate. For this activity, take one step to see local government in action.

- Attend or watch a local government meeting.
- Contact a local elected official to ask questions.
- Review a recent meeting agenda or minutes and learn about one issue or decision.
- Choose another way to participate in local government with your teacher's approval.

Requirements: Identify the local government you connected with. Describe what you did, explain the issue or decision you learned about, and identify how community members can have a voice in that decision. Then write 7-10 complete sentences explaining what the experience taught you about how local government works and how people can participate.