

# **Local Government CECH-UP Introduction**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

If you were asked to think of a symbol or picture of "government," what images would come to mind? The White House? Perhaps the state flag? Few of us would think of a school building, a wastewater treatment plant, or the local library. But these images represent some of the very important functions of local government, often overshadowed by the national and global issues that receive a large share of public attention. Local government is very much a part of our daily lives in ways that we may seldom stop to appreciate.

### **The goals of the Local Government CECH-UP Program are:**

- to teach Missouri middle school students about local government.
- to bring Missouri middle school students into direct contact with local governments.
- to familiarize Missouri middle school students with the profession of city management and public administration more generally.
- to have Missouri middle school students research and discuss problems and challenges facing local government.
- to have Missouri middle school students develop individual and class projects related to some aspects of local government.

In the state-wide Local Government CECH-UP Program (now MY LOGO), students learn about local government in general and their own community in particular. They study the structure and functions of local government, the challenges facing local governments and the important jobs carried out by local government officials. The program encourages students to become involved in their local community, to study how it is governed, to appreciate its strengths-the unique characteristics that make it a great place to go to school, work, and play-and to take an active role in making it a better community. By showing students how to become informed about and engaged in the political life of the community, the CECH-UP Program prepares them to be responsible citizens when they become adults.

## **HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK**

This Handbook contains lesson plans that offer a logical progression of instruction so that students can master the rich array of information provided. It includes reproducible materials such as overheads and handouts that teachers can make available to their students. These materials encourage students to research and discover answers to problems posed, and they offer a variety of teaching approaches with the expectation that teachers will select and adapt the materials to fit their own community and the interests of their students.

### **The Handbook begins with A Brief Overview of Missouri Local Government.**

Units One through Five of the Handbook include a great deal of information on the various kinds of local governments (counties, cities, school districts, and special

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districts), how they raise and spend revenues, and how they make land-use decisions. Students can relate this information to local government in their own areas and see variations in government across the state. The units also provide information on the relationship between local government and the local economy, so that students can appreciate the tie between government and economic development and have a better view of the "whole community."

**Units Six through Eight** of the Handbook offer an array of activities that engage students in collecting information on their local community, finding out how decisions are made, talking with local officials, learning about challenges facing the community, and developing and implementing action plans that build on the new knowledge and information they have collected.

The Handbook deals directly with many performance and knowledge areas of Missouri's Show Me Standards (see grids following Table of Contents). It provides activities in which students can work individually or together as a whole class or in small groups. Although the Handbook focuses on social studies, it lends itself to middle school team and interdisciplinary settings. Following the unit summaries are the Appendix, Glossary, and Teacher Resource Section.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT CECH-UP WEB SITE (NOW MY LOGO WEB SITE)**

A web site has been established to complement the Handbook. It provides:

- Basic information on local government, financing, and planning and zoning
- Links to local, state, and national governments and organizations.
- Maps and charts.
- Information on how to utilize the CECH process in conducting research and developing and implementing an action plan.
- Examples of student action projects.
- News and upcoming events.

The web site can be accessed at: <http://www.cech-up.org/>