



## GO ASK CITY HALL

(1 hour)

### OBJECTIVE

Students propose a park improvement or a similar youth-centered plan of action and walk through the processes of democracy and governance.

### MATERIALS

Maps of the community; markers, pens and paper; letter writing materials

### GET READY

- ✓ Obtain a map of the community from a source such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- ✓ Obtain a map (or create one) of the neighborhood immediately surrounding the school.
- ✓ Gather markers, pens, and paper.
- ✓ Divide your students into groups of four.
- ✓ Distribute the copy of the community map to each group.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Ask each group of students to imagine they are walking around the different areas featured on the map. Say, *What features of the town could be improved for the children living there?* (Ex. creating a new library, a new park, a new playground, etc.) Each group should discuss some possibilities and then design and illustrate a project idea for a part of the community.
- ✓ After the students present their responses, give each group a copy of the map of the school's immediate neighborhood.
- ✓ Say, *Let's look at our school's neighborhood. What is one small improvement in this part of town that could help children?* (Emphasize the importance of choosing a smaller project, like a new piece of playground equipment in a park or a street sign close to school.)

- ✓ Have each group suggest improvements for the area around the school.
- ✓ Vote: Which is the best idea presented to improve the school's neighborhood?
- ✓ Find out how much your improvement will cost the city by pricing the materials that are going to be installed. (Call the manufacturers of the equipment for a quote or call the city for an estimate.)
- ✓ Call City Hall and ask which office or board makes decisions in the area of your improvement. It might be the Library Department, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, etc.
- ✓ Have students write a letter (using proper letter format) to present the idea with a budget to the proper authorities.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How would your community pay for the improvement you suggested?*
- ★ *Do you think the fact that you are students will help or hinder the implementation of your idea? Would you have a better chance of having your thoughts heard if you were of voting age? Why or why not?*
- ★ *What are other ways students can impact their communities?*

### MORE!

Find out when your City Council or a public board meets. Encourage students and parents to attend such a meeting together. Ask those who attend to report about one proposal they observed at the meeting.

### SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT:

- ★ *A student portfolio would be an appropriate assessment for this lesson. A portfolio could include the community project they designed, with projected cost information, and the letter they wrote to a city official.*