

WHEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION WEEK AND THE STANDARDS OF LEARNING COLLIDE

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“How old do you have to be to speak at a board of supervisors’ meeting?”

“Do you have to go to college or have any special training to be a member of the board of supervisors?”

“How much do you get paid?”

“Do you like your job?”

“If I get arrested in Winchester will I be sent to the Winchester jail?”

These are just a few of the questions I and members of the Frederick County Board of Supervisors and School Board fielded as part of our Local Government Education Week 2.0 program. For the second year in a row, Frederick County Government partnered with Frederick County Public Schools to present a Local Government Education Week program to the eighth grade Civics classes at each of our four middle schools.

Our program was developed with two goals in mind. First, we wanted to educate the students about Frederick County government and the services we provide. Secondly, and what the schools deemed as most important, we wanted to provide a review of the local government portion of the Civics and Economics Standards of Learning (SOL). Working with high school Government Service Learning students from two of our high schools we began revising last year’s program, based upon student and teacher feedback, to create a more interactive learning experience for the students. We knew that we needed to engage the younger generation, build a more knowledgeable community, and to improve the Civics SOL scores.

Similar to last year, we utilized a program called Kahoot, which allowed us to create an online quiz game. The Kahoot quiz was administered before we presented our program and immediately after our program and the pre and post test results were captured so we could measure any student improvement.

In addition to Kahoot, this year we introduced a program called Quizlet, which allowed us to create an interactive study guide so the students could review their local government SOL Civics material. This program enabled the students to review the pertinent Civics SOL materials through a virtual flash card review, matching games, and/or a quiz format to include matching, fill in the blank, and true-false questions.

One of the neat things about working with the high school Service Learning students is while we teach them about local government they introduce us to new technologies and applications that we might not otherwise use. So there is learning taking place on both sides (i.e. supervisor to student and student to supervisor).

We developed an online scavenger hunt utilizing Frederick County’s website. Using real life scenarios where the students would interact with their local government and, using our

website, they would have to find the correct department that was responsible for addressing their issue.

Finally, we had a station where students could interact with members of the board of supervisors and school board. This was a six to seven minute question and answer session with the board members. To help facilitate dialogue, we prepared some seed questions to get things started and provided candy to those students who asked questions. The elected officials really enjoyed interacting with the eighth grade students and the students appreciated the opportunity to see and interact with their board member. The students also appreciated the candy!

At the end of our program, we found that the average pre-quiz score was 44.34%. The average post-quiz score was 82.34%, which was an improvement of 38 points. Surprisingly, our largest score improvement was 49 points, as we had one class score 42% on the pre-quiz and 91% on the post-quiz. In the weeks following our program, we were pleased to hear from Frederick County schools that the eighth grade students scored much higher this year on their Civics SOL exam, so we hope our program and review was part of the reason for this improvement.

An added bonus for the Service Learning students was that we discovered a possible error in the Standards of Learning Standard CE.8a. This standard speaks to the Constitutional Officers but listed only four as the Commonwealth's Attorney was omitted. We contacted the Virginia Department of Education raised this issue and provided evidence of this perceived error. We are curious to hear the outcome of our possible discovery.

As we close the book on another Local Government Education Week in Frederick County, we are excited about the positive feedback we received from teachers and students regarding this year's program and we are looking forward to next year and Local Government Education Week 3.0.