

School-to-Home Newsletter

Scott Foresman History-Social Science for California

Unit 5: California Government

History-Social Science 4.5 Students understand the structures, functions, and powers of the local, state, and federal governments as described in the U.S. Constitution.

Here are the main ideas we are learning:

- When the colonies decided to fight for their independence from England, they wrote the Declaration of Independence, which stated their goals.
- Once the colonies gained their freedom, they created a new government, guided by the principles laid out in the U.S. Constitution.
- The California Constitution works in conjunction with the U.S. Constitution.
- The second California Constitution was written in 1879. It describes the key purposes of the state government.
- There are three levels of government in the United States.
- Each branch of the federal government has different responsibilities.
- The California state government is structured into three branches.
- The branches of state government use checks and balances.
- Local governments serve and protect people.
- Tribal governments run rancherias and reservations.
- A school district is a type of local government.

Family Activities

Talk Together

Discuss why it is important that the U.S. Constitution is written down. What might happen if there was not a document that everyone can refer to when making decisions for our country and its citizens?

Learn Together

Help your child learn about federal, state, and local government.

- Create a Bill of Rights for your family. Include a list of the rights that every family member has, regardless of their age or gender. Post this Bill of Rights in a place where it will be seen often.
- Observe your government at work. Attend a city council meeting or county court proceeding. Then discuss what you saw.
- Find an example of a local law that was recently passed. Why do you think the federal government did not pass this law instead?

Read Together

Vote! by Eileen Christelow. (Houghton Mifflin Company, ISBN 0-618-48606-2, 2004) Nonfiction

We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, by David Catrow. (Dial Books, ISBN 0-803-72553-1, 2002) Nonfiction

How the U.S. Government Works, by Syl Sobel. (Barron's Educational Series, ISBN 0-764-11111-6, 1999) Nonfiction

Unit Reading Skill

Students are learning about Fact and Opinion. A *fact* is something that is generally believed to be true, and an *opinion* is a person's belief or judgment. Recognizing facts from opinions can help students better understand what they read.

THANK YOU
for supporting
your child's
education!