

Lesson 3: Federalism: How is Power Distributed?

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- Federalism is a constitutional principle in which power is divided between the federal government and state and local governments.
- The federal government holds certain powers described in the Constitution. For example, the federal government has the power to declare and conduct war, control trade between the states and other nations, create post offices, and coin money.
- Powers not given to the federal government are reserved for state governments or the people. For example, the state governments have the power to create schools, control trade within the state, make traffic laws, and regulate laws about marriage and divorce.
- Some powers like taxing and spending are shared by both state and federal governments.
- Federalism serves to limit the power of government.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson students explore how the people delegate power in our federal system. Through classroom discussion and informational reading, students learn that some powers are given to our federal government and other powers are reserved for state governments or to the people. Students also learn about shared powers. Finally, in a “Power Sort” game students decide which level of government would have the power in different situations. As a debriefing activity following the game, students discuss why it is important to divide power between the federal and state governments and how federalism limits the power of the government.

Content Expectations

- 4 - *C3.0.2*: Give examples of powers granted to the federal government (e.g., coining of money, declaring war) and those reserved for the states (e.g., driver’s license, marriage license).
- 5 – *U3.3.6*: Describe the principle of federalism and how it is expressed through the sharing and distribution of power as stated in the Constitution (e.g., enumerated and reserved powers).

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

- RI.5.1*: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

- RI.5.3:* Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
- RI.5.4:* Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

Key Concepts:

constitution
federalism
limited government

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Computer with display, document camera and projector, or overhead projector
Construction paper
Glue or tape
Scissors

Student Resource

State vs. Federal Government. Ben's Guide to US Government for Kids. 28 August 2012
<<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/government/index.html>>.

Teacher Resource

Hart, Rachel. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*. Teacher-made material. Oakland Schools, 2012.

Lesson Sequence

Teacher Note: In this lesson do not show the Lesson Graphic Organizer to students until Step 5.

1. Begin this lesson by reminding students that they have already learned that the power of government is limited by the Constitution through the principles of popular sovereignty, separation of powers, and checks and balances. If necessary, display these Word Cards from the previous two lessons.
2. Display the excerpt from "Article 1, Section 10" located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*. Read the excerpt to students and have them contemplate its meaning. Highlight the phrases "no state shall enter into any treaty" and "coin money." Help them to understand that the people through the Constitution only delegate (gives) powers to the federal government. In some cases, the Constitution says explicitly that the state governments cannot do something. In this case only the federal government can coin money and enter into treaties with other countries.
3. Explain that this division of power is called "federalism." Using Word Card #17 for "federalism," discuss how federalism helps to limit the power of government. Display Word Card #18 on

“federal government” and help students understand that the phrase “national” government is sometimes used interchangeably with federal government since it is the government for the entire nation. Display Word Card #19 on “state government” and discuss any information they recall from third grade when they studied Michigan and its government.

4. Divide students into partner groups of 2-3 students each and distribute the “Federalism Information Sheet” located in *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*. Have partners read and discuss the information sheet. As an optional activity students can visit the following webpage to read online about federalism: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/index.html>.
5. When all students have read the “Federalism Information Sheet”, distribute the blank graphic organizer “Federalism: Power Divided” blank graphic organizer” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*. Have students work together to complete this graphic organizer by summarizing information from the information sheet. Once the students have completed this task display the lesson graphic organizer located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*. Have students compare their organizer to this one. Use the following questions to discuss the concept of federalism:
 - Why shouldn’t states be allowed to make their own money?
 - Why should the federal government have the power to control trade between states?
 - How do you think the Framers, or writers, of the Constitution decided which level of government would get which powers?
6. Instruct students to put away their “Federalism Information Sheet” and their completed graphic organizer. Distribute the “Power Sort” Game located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*, a piece of construction paper, and scissors to the student partner groups. Have students follow the directions at the top of the sheet. As students work, circulate through the room and guide students that may be struggling. Once a group finishes, check the placement of their pieces for accuracy and remove any that may be placed incorrectly. Have the students sort incorrect pieces again. If the students are completely correct, instruct them to glue or tape their headings and pieces onto the construction paper. Students that finish can assist the teacher in checking the accuracy of other groups.
7. After all student groups have finished, lead a class discussion by continuing the line of questioning you began in Step 5. The following questions can be used:
 - Why don’t they decide everything for us in Washington D.C.?
 - What if the federal government did make ALL the laws for each state?
 - Do you think state governments and the federal government ever argue over issues of power? Why or why not?
8. Finally, discuss how federalism limits the power of government. In doing so, remind students that the people, through the principle of popular sovereignty, delegated some power to the federal government in the Constitution. The people also put some specific limits on the powers of state governments in the Constitution. Ask students to identify some examples of this limit on state government. Then, display the “Tenth Amendment” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 1, Lesson 3)*. Have students turn and talk with a partner about what this text in the Constitution is saying. Then discuss with the whole class by first eliciting several student

responses. Explain to students that this part of the Constitution makes the principle of popular sovereignty come alive. Ask students to explain why this is so. Guide students to see that the people (and states) retain powers any power not specifically limited by the Constitution.

Assessment

The “Power Sort” game described in Step 5 can serve as an assessment.