



Lesson 18.24 “The Executive Branch & The Executive Council”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will be able to describe the role of the executive branch in the New Hampshire state government
- Students will simulate a council meeting to experience the significance of the Executive Council’s role within the executive branch
- Students will work together to debate a point of view with their peers

Lesson Competencies

- I can identify, explain, and analyze the core civic practices and foundational principles that guide governments and communities. (Moose SS)
- I can describe how citizens can participate in the government.
- I can employ argumentative structures and persuasive techniques (rhetorical devices, elaboration, call to action) to convey claims and counterclaims related to a topic/text/issue. (ELA 6)

Essential Questions

How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

What are the responsibilities of federal, state, and local government?

How is a balance of power part of our democracy?

Estimated Time

One 45-minute class session

Materials & Equipment

Unit 18 Learn It!, “[Federal and State Government](#),” page 3.
Unit 18, Learn It!, “[Federalism and the Federal Government](#),” pages 9-12
Infographic: [Layers of Federalism](#)
Class set of “What are the Executive Branch Powers”
Group sets of “Executive Council Meeting Planning”
Coin or paper slips marked “accept” or “reject”



Educator Introduction & Rationale

The executive branch in New Hampshire is the governor, the executive council, and all of the state departments and agencies in the state government. One of the ways that New Hampshire's government is different from the government of other states is the executive council. Other states have executive councils that advise the governor, but the executive council doesn't get to vote on what the governor can or cannot do. In New Hampshire the governor and the executive council decide together who to appoint to lead state agencies or serve as judges, and what action to take on many other major issues. The governor needs three councilors to agree with him if wants to do anything. The five members of the executive council each represent a district in New Hampshire. They are elected by the people every two years. The governor is also elected by the people every two years but represents the entire state.

This is the thirteenth lesson for middle school students in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. In this lesson, students learn about how the executive branch functions at the state level in New Hampshire. An activation first breaks down the powers the executive branch does and does not have. A simulation game helps students learn about the active role the Executive Council plays in New Hampshire. The extension activity is recommended for students who are ready to think critically about checks and balances within the New Hampshire executive branch. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom.

Before the Learning Activity

Student reading and comprehension questions

The executive branch in New Hampshire. Students should read from Unit 18 Learn It!, "[Federal and State Government](#)," page 3.

Students unfamiliar with the three branches of government will also benefit from reviewing "[Federalism and the Federal Government](#)," pages 9-12, which discuss the roles of the three branches in the federal government. This [infographic](#) about the three branches of government will also be helpful for the activation activity.

Learning Activity

Activation

The powers of the executive branch. Distribute "What are the Executive Branch Powers?" After students complete it, discuss their answers together. If students have already covered federalism and the three branches of government, this can serve as a review.

Direct Instruction

Review with students that:

- In New Hampshire, the executive branch is made up of an elected governor and an executive council of five representatives.
 - While an executive council is not unique to New Hampshire, the fact that the governor needs 3/5 of the councilors to agree with them to approve state contracts and appointments is different from other executive councils.
 - The Executive Council is therefore a check on the power of the governor and ensures the executive power is not just in the hands of one person.
- The executive branch is responsible for putting plans and laws into effect. These laws are made by the legislative branch and their constitutionality is evaluated by the judicial branch.
- There is one council member for each of five districts of New Hampshire, and they are elected every two years to represent 1/5th of the population of New Hampshire. The governor is also elected every two years, but they represent the whole state.

Guided Practice

Hold an Executive Council meeting. In this simulation, students present a point of view on an issue and campaign for their perspective to become the dominant opinion of the executive branch.

The teacher should act as the governor and present a resolution that has been sent to the executive. This could be something that the students would have a strong opinion on, for example, whether they should have homework, or get some sort of reward that works within your classroom management system. Alternatively, it could be a made-up proposed law such as "Everyone in New Hampshire must have a pet ladybug," or something representative of issues facing the school's own local government.



Divide students into five groups – one to represent each of the council districts in New Hampshire. The teacher should begin by presenting the terms of the resolution and their opinion – which should be to reject (“veto”) the proposal. Then call for a meeting of the executive council.

Each group will receive a worksheet to plan their argument. Depending on the temperament of the class and the type of proposal on the table, you may wish to assign a particular point of view to each group. This could look like:

- A coin flip determining whether to present the “accept” or “reject” side of the debate
- Pulling an “accept” or “reject” card from a hat
- Each group being pre-assigned a point of view on their worksheet, or
- Students deciding within their group whether to accept or reject the proposal

Give the groups about 10 minutes to determine the evidence they will present to argue their side and elect a member of their group to be the spokesperson to present their argument. The teacher can also use this time to try to sway the councilors to agree with their opinion.

After each group has had time to prepare, the governor/teacher should call on each council to present their opinion and evidence. Depending on time, the students could also have chances to question and challenge each other’s arguments.

After the arguments have been presented, the governor/teacher will present their opinion – which may have been revised by the student’s presentations or the same as what was presented before. However, it is important to note that this is an act that requires approval from the council. Each group will place one vote for/against the resolve. Let them know they do not have to vote in alignment with the point-of-view they argued if they were swayed by other arguments.

Before revealing the total of the votes, the teacher should remind students that the Executive Council cannot prevent a governor from vetoing a bill. So, in this scenario, they were consulted for advice rather than action. The teacher can then use their discretion on whether they, as the governor, will uphold the veto, be swayed by the result of the votes, or change their opinion to accept the proposal.

Teaching tip: If you instead wish for the majority to override the governor/teacher’s opinion, we suggest phrasing the deliberation around an appointment for a classroom job rather than an issue since appointments can be overridden. The same worksheets can be used for this version.

Extension/

Why does this work? Students may have been surprised by the results of the Executive Council meeting. They may disagree with what



Reflection

the council can/cannot do within the executive branch. Return to the idea of checks and balances in the government and ask the students to justify why this system works. How is the governor's power kept in check? How is the Executive Council's power checked by the governor?

Supporting Materials

Other Resources

- An overview of the Executive Council: <https://www.council.nh.gov/about-us>
- View prior Executive Meeting videos: <https://nhexecutivecouncil.com/archive>
- Learn about the Executive Councilor who represents your 1/5th of the population: <https://www.council.nh.gov/>



Standards

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: The Nature and Purpose of Government (SS:CV:8:1.1)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:8:2.1, SS:CV:8:2.4)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.4.6-8)
- ✓ Participation and Deliberation (D2.Civ.7.6-8, D2.Civ.10.6-8)
- ✓ Processes, Rules, and Laws (D2.Civ.11.6-8)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details (RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.3)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration (SL.8.1a, SL.8.1b, SL.8.1c, SL.8.1d)

Lesson Vocabulary

appointment	(noun) A non-elective office or position
branch of government	(noun) A section of government with its own purpose; the U.S. government has three sections of the government with different responsibilities that support each other to create, examine, and enforce laws
checks and balances	(noun) The idea where separate parts of the government are given powers to stop each other's actions and are made to share power
executive branch	(noun) The section of government that puts plans and laws into effect
Executive Council	(noun) In New Hampshire, the elected group of people who advise the governor
law	(noun) A rule that regulates the actions of members of a community
governor	(noun) The leader of the executive branch of a state government, or during the colonial period, a colony government
veto	(verb) To reject something; in government, to reject the final version of a bill passed by the legislature