Federalism and You

Lesson Overview

Compelling Question

- How much power should states have in a united nation?

Suggested Grade(s)	Level 3: High School	Time Required	Two class periods plus one summative assessment

Lesson Objectives

- Identify the powers the states hold in our federal system of government.
- Examine how federalism directly affects their lives by looking at case studies on driving policies for teenagers.
- Defend a position as to whether the federal government should regulate teen driver requirements and laws during a civic conversation.

Lesson Assessments

- Students demonstrate their understanding of federalism by investigating rules and policies for teen drivers by state and participating in a civic conversation about the role the federal government should take in teenage driver regulations.

- Teachers may assess by using the Assessment Rubric.
- Students will participate in self-reflection by completing the Inquiry Reflection Tool.

Civic Skills & Dispositions

- Active learning
- Attentiveness to political matters
- Close reading
- Collaboration
- Consensus building
- Critical thinking
- Incorporating evidence
- Primary source analysis
- Problem-solving
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making
- Self-management
- Self-reflection
- Sense of purpose
- Teamwork

Civic Competencies

Students will develop their responsible decision-making by analyzing situations, evaluating choices and consequences, and considering the well-being of self and others.

Lesson Overview

Alignments

Center for Civic Education

We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution (Level 3, 4th edition)

- Lesson 26: How Does American Federalism Work?

We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution (Level 3, 5th edition)

- Lesson 19: What Kind of Union Did the Constitution Create?

Educating for American Democracy Roadmap

Theme #4: A New Government & Constitution

- Develop an understanding of the purpose, processes, strengths, and weaknesses of U.S. government and politics.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework

- **D2.Civ.7.9-12.** Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.

Common Core Standards for Literacy in Social Studies

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1.** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Supporting Questions

- To what extent should federalism permit states to make their own decisions while remaining united as one country?
- What are some unique powers of states in the United States?
- What are some issues decided by the states that impact you?
- Is it important that state governments exercise autonomy within American federalism?

Texts & Materials

Day 1:

- *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* (Level 3 textbook, 4th edition)
- Visual Vocabulary organizer
- Driving requirements case studies
- Case Study Analysis Tool

Day 2:

- Deliberation Preparation Guide
- Deliberation Document
- Inquiry Reflection Tool
- Assessment Rubric

Vocabulary

- **federalism:** A system of government in which power is divided between national, state, and local governments. Each level can govern independently in some areas while sharing authority in others, balancing power and protecting citizens' rights.
- **grants-in-aid:** Federal money given to state or local governments for specific projects, allowing the federal government to support programs like education, healthcare, and infrastructure while influencing state policies.
- **police powers:** Inherent authority of a government to impose restrictions on private rights for the sake of public welfare, order, and security within the boundaries of constitutional law.
- **regulation of commerce:** Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gives Congress the power to regulate interstate commerce. States retain the power to regulate commerce within their own borders as part of their police powers.
- **reserved powers:** Those powers referred to in the Ninth and Tenth Amendments that are reserved to the states or to the people.
- **supremacy clause:** Article VI, Section 2, of the Constitution, which states that the U.S. Constitution, laws passed by Congress, and treaties of the United States "shall be the supreme Law of the Land" and binding on the states.
- **Tenth Amendment:** "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Educator Background

Teachers should have a basic understanding of American federalism. In short, federalism is a system of government in which the same territory is controlled by two levels of government. In the United States, that translates to the system in which both the national and state governments divide and share power. In general, the central or federal government is responsible for broader governance of the nation as a whole, while the states and cities govern issues of local concern.

The in-class voting activities in this lesson help normalize the experience for students by showing that sharing opinions and participating in decisions is a regular and valued part of our classroom. By voting, students learn that everyone's opinions matter and that each voice is important in shaping our classroom community. We want all students to feel empowered to participate and be heard. Additionally, this act of voting models a key civic responsibility, helping students understand the importance of engagement and decision-making that they will carry with them beyond the classroom.

Teachers can enhance student understanding by connecting the lesson to students' own experiences with government and by using diverse, culturally relevant examples that show how state policies affect different communities.

Teachers can find additional background support resources as follows:

- American Federalism | Center for Civic Education
- Federalism & Limited Government | Center for Civic Education
- Foundations of the Constitution | Center for Civic Education
- Why Counties Matter
- Federalism: Crash Course Government and Politics #4

Additional resources on pedagogical practices include the following:

- Simulated Congressional Hearings: Preparation & Practice (CEAS Pedagogy Video 1)
- Literacy Integration: Vocabulary & Paraphrasing (CEAS Pedagogy Video 2)
- Building Relational Capacity through Peer Feedback (CEAS Pedagogy Video 3)
- Creating Community Agreements (CEAS Pedagogy Video 4)

Educators should preview all student materials and resources prior to the lesson.

Lesson Plan

Engage: Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Greet students upon entry into the classroom, and welcome them to social studies.
2. Post these driving facts for students to view. Ask students to identify whether they think the statements are true (thumbs up or stand up) or false (thumbs down or remain seated).
    - In New Jersey, drivers are not allowed to pump their own gas. (True—attendants pump gas for you)
    - In New York City, it's legal to honk your horn any time you want. (False—only in emergencies)
    - In Alaska, drivers are required to carry tire chains during the winter. (True)
    - In Montana, there is no statewide law requiring motorcycle helmets for adults. (True)
    - In Oregon, you must stop at every railroad crossing, even if no train is coming. (False—only when train is coming)
    - In Florida, a driver under 19 cannot drive between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. without supervision. (True)
3. Review the correct answers and debrief the civic learning by facilitating a class discussion about federalism asking students:
    - Why do you think driving rules vary so much from state to state?
    - How might federalism influence these differences?
4. Display and introduce the compelling question: "How much power should states have in a united nation?"
5. Allow students time to make a prediction about the inquiry question as well as offer their own supporting questions.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Establish norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
- Be mindful of potential cultural differences and other factors that might influence expectations or opinions around rules.
- Allow sufficient wait time for students to formulate answers.
- Consider printing or displaying T/F statements for students to review.
- Consider allowing students trio time to formulate answers.
- Consider asking student volunteers to rephrase the compelling question, if needed.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Define and provide visuals for terms that may be difficult or culturally unclear for students.
- Translate the compelling question into students' native language, if needed.

Civic Competencies

- Active learning
- Attentiveness to political matters
- Consensus building
- Responsible decision-making
- Self-management

Lesson Plan

Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

1. Tell students that today you are going to explore why there are differences in state requirements when it comes to driving.
2. Ask students for a definition of federalism and capture responses on an anchor chart. Possible responses may include:
    - Shared powers between state and federal governments
    - Powers given to all levels of government
    - State and national government working together
    - State and national governments both having their own separate powers
3. Provide a class definition: Federalism is a system of government in which power is divided between national, state, and local governments..
4. Distribute the Visual Vocabulary organizer and review to ensure students understand expectations.
5. Instruct students to read pp. 189–192 in their *We the People* Level 3, 4th edition, textbook to complete the Visual Vocabulary organizer.
6. Circulate around the classroom to encourage students, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Desks arranged in tables/clusters are recommended to facilitate better student collaboration.
- Alternatively, sections of the reading could be completed together in a full-class format, with pauses to address questions in the text.
- Consider allowing students to work in trio teams to complete reading and divide the vocabulary among teammates.
- Use assistive technology tools to adjust text readability and give students better access to the content.
- Model annotating definitions on Visual Vocabulary organizer to guide students in creating their definitions and illustrations.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider using a word wall to help learners understand and use new academic language by providing clear, accessible reminders of important terms.
- Model how to complete the first vocabulary term on the Visual Vocabulary organizer as a class.

Civic Competencies

- Close reading
- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Self-management

Lesson Plan

Explain: Discuss and Share

1. Return to a full-class format in order to review vocabulary.
2. Display the following examples one at a time and encourage students to match the vocabulary to the respective example:
    - Your state gets federal money to provide free or reduced-price school lunches or to help pay for highways. (grants-in-aid)
    - If a state tried to ban something that federal law protects (like equal rights at school), the federal law would override the state rule. (supremacy clause)
    - Because the Constitution does not mention schools, states get to decide things like testing and class requirements. (Tenth Amendment)
    - The federal government sets rules for companies like Amazon or TikTok that do business across state lines. (regulation of commerce)
    - Your state requires wearing seat belts or has laws about curfews and public safety. (police powers)
    - Your school follows national education rules, but your state decides the school calendar and graduation requirements. (federalism)
    - Your state decides the minimum age to get a driver's license. (reserved powers)
3. Push students' thinking to explain their reasoning on vocabulary match by asking:
    - What makes you say that?
    - What evidence did you find in the textbook to support that?
4. Review each example and correct any misconceptions.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Allow sufficient wait time for students to formulate answers
- Consider allowing students trio team time to formulate answers.
- Allow students to utilize their Visual Vocabulary organizer during the discussion.
- Alternatively, students could work in trio teams to match using sorting slips of each example.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Translate examples into native language prior to matching activity.
- Consider using visuals to illustrate the concept for the matching activity.

Civic Competencies

- Attentiveness to political matters
- Critical thinking
- Incorporating evidence
- Self-management

Extended Learning

- Students could create additional examples of each vocabulary term to exchange with classmates to solve.

Lesson Plan

Elaborate: Apply New Learning

1. Post the following statement: The federal government should have more control over driving policies for teenagers in the states.
2. Conduct a class vote on whether your students agree with this statement via secret ballot. Encourage students to make a note of their vote at this time.
    - Make a point to emphasize this act of voting. Explain that everyone's opinions matter and we want everyone to have a voice in our classroom decisions. Furthermore, voting is a civic responsibility we are modeling now.
3. Using your routine, divide students into collaborative teams of three or four students each.
4. Tell students that in order to answer our compelling question, we will participate in a civic conversation. To prepare for the conversation, students will be provided with several documents to explore.
5. Distribute the Youth Driving Requirements by State Case Study and Case Study Analysis Tool to each group and review to ensure students understand expectations. Instruct students to use the analysis document to collect information that supports arguments for and against more federal authority over driving requirements for teenagers.
6. Remind students of norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
7. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
8. Return to a full-class format and allow students to share a few examples of what they notice and wonder about from their first observation of the data.
9. Debrief this civic learning by facilitating a brief class discussion by asking
    - What patterns or trends stood out to you?
    - What "ahas" did you have?
    - What was surprising or concerning?

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Consider allowing students to utilize a speak-to-type feature to record their answers on the graphic organizer.
- Utilize a text reader function when needed.
- Divide sources among team members so each is responsible for only three or four sources.
- Model how to use the Case Study Analysis Tool for one of the sources.
- Chunk the steps to complete the Case Study Analysis Tool, pausing in between to review as a class.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Sentence starters are included for additional support on the graphic organizer.
- Translate graphic organizer into students' native language as needed.
- Partner multilingual students with strong language speakers to support concept understanding, build confidence, and encourage meaningful conversation.

Civic Competencies

- Collaboration
- Critical thinking
- Primary source analysis
- Relationship skills
- Sense of purpose
- Teamwork

Extending Learning

- Allow students to research their own resources that could help support or provide evidence for their argument.

Lesson Plan

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage

1. Revisit the statement "The federal government should have more control over driving policies for teenagers in the states."
2. Remind students there will be a civic conversation about this statement today. Provide students with the Deliberation Preparation Guide to guide their efforts in answering the debate question. As desired, students can work individually or in teams of two or three.
3. Remind students they should use the evidence from their case-study analysis, vocabulary, and *We the People* reading to defend their position within the class debate.
4. Circulate around the classroom to monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.
5. Once students have completed their debate preparation, revisit the statement "The federal government should have more control over driving policies for teenagers in the states."
6. Conduct another class vote on whether your students agree with the statement, but this time, have students vote with their feet.
7. Based on their vote, divide students into two teams:
    - I think the federal government SHOULD have more control over driving policies for teenagers in states.
    - I think the federal government SHOULD NOT have more control over driving policies for teenagers in states.
8. Allot time for groups to discuss their main points. As needed, consider breaking up the two groups into smaller groups for easier collaboration.
9. Distribute the Deliberation Document and review to ensure students understand expectations.
10. Facilitate the civic conversation by allowing each side to take turns sharing their points. While students are listening, remind them to fill out their Deliberation Document. Educators should seek out opportunities to incorporate academic language into this civic conversation.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- This could be structured as a full-class deliberation or small-group conversations discussing the question.
- Consider allowing students to utilize a speak-to-type feature to record their answers on the graphic organizer.
- Provide sentence starters to help students develop their positions.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Provide students with written questions and sentence starters to prepare for their discussion.
- Allow students to capture thoughts to prompt in native language first, then translate using technology as needed.
- As an alternative to public speaking, students could create an audio or video recording of their stance using p. 2 of the Deliberation Preparation Guide.

Civic Competencies

- Active learning
- Active listening
- Attentiveness to political matters
- Collaboration
- Critical thinking
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making
- Self-management
- Self-reflection

Lesson Plan

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage (cont.)

11. At the conclusion of the debate, conduct a final class vote on whether your students agree with the statement.
12. Thank your young scholars for their investigation of federalism.
13. Consider utilizing the Inquiry Reflection Tool.

Instructional Supports (cont.)

Extending Learning

- Students might practice public speaking by delivering their position statement to their trio teammates.
- To dig further into federalism and its impact, the teacher could ask the following:
    - What role does the state government play in your life?
    - What role does the federal government play in your life?
    - Is it important that state governments exercise autonomy within American federalism? Why or why not?

Simulated Congressional Hearing Connection Summative Assessment

Guide students to write a brief statement taking a position on the inquiry question "How much power should states have in a united nation?" The statement should include a clear thesis and three supporting pieces of evidence drawn from the text, class discussions, current events, or personal experiences. This activity is a good way to practice the written testimony expectations in preparation for their simulated hearings.