

WHO MAKES IT HAPPEN? (6-8)

OBJECTIVE: Students will understand how checks and balances work by exploring how Congress makes laws and the Executive branch implements them. Students will apply this idea to School Participatory Budgeting by identifying how students can hold school leaders accountable to make sure approved projects are implemented.

STANDARDS:

- **6.C4.1** Explain challenges and opportunities people and groups face when solving local, regional, and/or global problems.
- **7.SP4.1** Explain the multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past and present.
- **7.C4.3** Analyze the purpose, process, implementation, and consequences of decision making and public policies in multiple settings.
- **8.SP4.3** Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the multiple causes and effects of events and issues.
- **8.C1.1** Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, including the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, and explain how they influence society and political systems.
- **8.C4.3** Analyze the purpose, process, implementation, and consequences of decision making and public policies in multiple settings and at different levels including the national, state, local (county, city, school board), and tribal.

CIVICS EXAM QUESTIONS:

- What stops one branch of the government from becoming too powerful? **A:** Checks & Balances

TIMELINE: This lesson is best suited after the Voting phase, during the Implementation and Evaluation phase. This lesson serves as a follow-up on the election results.

APPROXIMATE LESSON LENGTH: One 60-minute class period, plus additional time for creating the specifics of the implementation oversight plan if needed.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

- [US Constitution Article II, Section 3: Take Care Clause](#)
- Sticky Notes

VOCABULARY:

- Checks & Balances
- Executive Branch
- Legislative Branch

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Engage

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Pose the following scenario to students to encourage individual reflection: Imagine Congress passed a law and set aside money to give every K-12 school in the U.S. free internet. The President is supposed to make it happen. What if the President just didn't do anything?
 - Have students pair up with a peer to share their reflections on this scenario.
- Bring students back together as a whole group. Invite students to share their own reflections or highlights from the paired conversation.
- Then have the class discuss the following questions:
 - Who should ensure the law is implemented?
 - What are some reasons the implementation of the law might be delayed?
 - What should happen if someone in charge doesn't follow the law?
- Explain that in School Participatory Budgeting, the students voted on a project to implement and that this is like Congress passing a law. Once a project is approved, who ensures it actually happens? Let students know that they will be exploring checks and balances, the roles of carrying out laws, and what can be done if implementation doesn't happen.

2. Explore

- Display the text of the *U.S. Constitution Article II, Section 3: Take Care Clause* for the students. Provide time for students to read or review, while highlighting specific phrases and language for emphasis and clarification, or help to guide student understanding with the simplified version".
 - *Simplified version: "The President must make sure that laws passed by Congress are followed and carried out."*
- Next, have the students analyze the text to answer the following questions in pairs or small groups:
 - What power does this section give the President?
 - What does it mean to "carry out" a law?
 - Why do you think that job is important?

- What happens/should happen if the President or anyone else in power doesn't follow the rules?
- Now, connect the Take Care Clause to the School Participatory Budgeting process by asking the students the following questions in a class discussion:
 - In School Participatory Budgeting who acts like Congress and makes decisions (students)?
 - Who acts like the President and makes it happen (principal)?
 - If something gets delayed, how should the people in charge let us know?
 - Should there be consequences if nothing happens?
- Explain to students that, just like Congress can check the President and ask questions, students can respectfully do the same.

3. Explain

- Even when a good idea is approved, it doesn't always get done right away. There is even a chance it doesn't get done at all! Just like with laws or policies, implementation takes time, resources, and people following through.
 - **Practice Scenario:** Let's say a water bottle refill station was supposed to be installed months ago, we might ask, "why hasn't it happened yet?". We might now ask, "what if the funding didn't come through", or "did facilities staff have enough time"? From here, I would consider which adults I can reach out to in order to help me answer these questions.
- **Activity:** Split students up into three groups and give each a scenario where the winning project hasn't happened yet:
 - **Scenario #1:** A charging station for phones hasn't been set up in the library.
 - **Scenario #2:** A calm-down corner with bean bags and soft lights hasn't been created.
 - **Scenario #3:** A mural with the school motto has not been painted yet.
- Have students brainstorm *why* the project might not have happened yet (money, rules, time).
- Students should come up with 2-3 "why" questions they could ask adults to learn more.
- Explain to students that projects, like laws, take time. They involved planning, approvals, and teamwork. This is why follow up and oversight are important.

4. Elaborate

- Explain to students that in government, Congress checks the President to make sure laws are followed. In PB, you can check in with school leaders to make sure your projects are happening too.

- **Activity:** Ask students the following questions and record their answers where they can see.
 - What questions do we need to ask about our PB project?
 - Who do we talk to?
 - What might be slowing things down?
 - What can we do as students to follow up?
 - How can we ask in a respectful and clear way?
- Students will create their Implementation Oversight Plan that includes:
 - Three action steps they can take to check in or help their project move forward.
 - Timeline: when will we follow up?
 - Accountability: who is responsible for each step?
- **Explain** to the students that they should be respectful, clear, and specific when following up. Students are representing their peers just like Congress represents the people.

5. Evaluate

- **Exit Ticket:** As a closing reflection, students will create an “implementation wall” as a visual display to track their progress over time. Each student will respond to the following prompt on a sticky note:
 - What is one step I can take right now to ensure the project is implemented?
- Students should use a new sticky note for each new idea and are encouraged to make more than one.
- Once all notes are added to the wall, students will read their peer’s response and share their reflections with one another.