Lesson Plan: Federal Budgeting 101

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Featured resource

Chris Potter/Flickr

[KQED's The Lowdown: How Big is the Federal Budget and Where Does That Money Go?](#)

[CNN: Breaking Down Trump's Budget Proposal](#) (2:06 clip)

Opening quick write prompt:

What do you think the federal government should spend the most money on? (For example: Education? Defense? Healthcare? Retirement programs like social security?) You can only choose one! Be sure to explain your choice.

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will analyze the federal budget process and debt ceiling debates.

- Students will evaluate and reflect on current budgeting priorities.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

What is the federal budget process, and how does it affect ordinary Americans?

The federal budgeting process has begun. The annual event has become a bitter showdown in recent decades, and this year promises to be no different following President Trump's address to Congress on March 1. High on the administration's budget priority list: Increased military spending and cuts to other government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the State Department. Despite partisan wrangling, the steps to passing a federal budget are clearly defined. This lesson explores the process and invites students to reflect on what their own federal budget priorities would be.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the reading, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Deficit (n.)	An amount of something (usually money) that is less than the amount needed
Fiscal (adj.)	Relating to money or financial matters
Infrastructure (n.)	The basic structures, like roads and bridges, needed for a country to function
Revenue (n.)	Money that is paid to or made by a business or government
Safety Net (n.)	Something that provides help or security against difficult times

Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to discover which pieces of the federal budget students would prioritize.

- As a class, examine the pie chart graphic featured in The Lowdown post. Go over the three major parts of the budget "pie:" social security, defense and healthcare. Explain that these three categories make up the majority of the federal budget. The remaining money is divided across multiple departments, as shown in the breakout of the blue pie chart piece.

- Watch the CNN video clip at the top of The Lowdown, which is a brief overview of President Trump's budget priorities.

- **Check for understanding:** After watching the video, ask: Which of the budget "big 3" (social security, healthcare or defense) does President Trump want to increase? (Answer: Defense). What else will be affected? (Infrastructure, the border wall). What departments are scheduled to be cut? (EPA, education, foreign aid) What are off limits? (social security, Medicare, welfare)

Independent practice

- In small groups or individually, students read The Lowdown post.

- As they read, students prepare the answer to the following questions:

    o   Which branch of the government actually passes the budget?
    o   What happens if there is no agreement on the budget before the deadline?
    o   What is the "debt ceiling"? Why is it important?

Assessment/reflection

- After finishing the reading, students respond to the following questions in a discussion or as a written reflection:
    - Why doesn't a president ever get exactly what he wants when he proposes a new budget?
    - Of the current budget priorities, which one do you most agree with? Explain why citing evidence from The Lowdown post and other sources.
    - Of the current budget priorities, which do you most disagree with? Why?

Circle chats, small-group discussions and think-pair-share provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension/homework

Follow your issue through the first 100 days. Using these resources and others, ask students to make a plan for how they can follow their issue, including the budget priorities they are most interested in, through the first 100 days (the end of April).

First 100 Days: Art in the Age of Trump: KQED Arts is accepting submission from artists of all ages for this series. Art of all types (visual, music, dance, poetry) are welcome, and ideally submissions should focus on a specific issue, rather than the appearance or personality of a politician. Find the online submission form here.

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.