**Standards:**

**North Carolina Essential Standards > Fifth Grade Social Studies (2010)**

**NCES.5.C&G.1.2** Summarize the organizational structures and powers of the United States government (legislative, judicial and executive branches of government).

**iCivics Games:**

Do you like running things? *Branches of Power* allows you to do something that no one else can: control all three branches of government! You'll have the power to write any laws you want about issues you choose. Careful, though, there's a lot to juggle when you're playing all three branches:

<https://www.icivics.org/games/branches-power>

Lesson Overview:

1. Introduction
2. Separation of Powers
3. Federal Government Structure
4. Major Players Game
5. Wrap Up

Lesson Objectives:

* Be able to identify the three branches of government and their functions
* Name current major players in those structures (President, Vice President, Supreme Court Justice, etc)
* Begin to identify concrete checks and balances (corollary: basic understanding of how a law/”rule” is made)

1. Introduction (5-10 minutes)
   1. Ask the students the guiding questions from the previous week(s) to assess where they stand in their knowledge about the Bill of Rights and Constitution
   2. Based off the answers, briefly review any information needed
   3. Begin the lesson by taking a 1-2 minute brainstorm of people they know who work in government (Donald Trump, Paul Ryan, Barack Obama, etc)
2. Separation of Powers Skit (5-10)
   1. Ask for two volunteers. Tell students to watch carefully--you’re going to ask for their thoughts later
   2. Have the volunteers read out the “Separation of Powers” skit. Once they’ve returned, ask students to identify what went wrong (the same person made the laws, enforced them, and determined that they were fair)
   3. Explain that the Framers were worried something like this would happen, so when they wrote the Constitution to shape the government, they intentionally split up that power into different branches of government
3. Explanation of Federal Government Structure
   1. Ideally, basic 3-pronged structure was introduced in Constitution I. If not, review idea of legislative, executive, judicial.
      1. One to make the laws, one to enforce them, one to make sure they’re fair, as a gross simplification
   2. Play the *Schoolhouse Rock* “I’m Just a Bill” video -- “prime” the students that it may seem young for them, but that the material is valuable.
      1. Ask them to identify what branches of government were involved. Who did they see? Who did they not see?
      2. What power does the President have if there is a law that she doesn’t like? (veto)
      3. If the President vetoes, what happens?
      4. What if both the President and Congress pass a law, but citizens are worried it’s not fair. Is there anything we can do? (answer: sue, take case to courts)
   3. Three-legged stool metaphor: government needs all three branches to work in order to support the country and the Constitution
4. Current Major Players
   1. Refer to running list of people they know working in government
   2. Begin game to identify current major players in government
      1. Split up students into teams and either project images on board or pass them out
      2. Teams get one point each for: name of person; what branch they are a part of; what their role is
      3. Challenge version: Include a high-profile member of Cabinet? Explain that Executive branch is made up of more than just the President
5. Wrap Up
   1. Review material
      1. Have students name three things they learned that day
   2. Feedback
      1. Use “exit slips” to see what questions the students might have
      2. Use the exit slips to help prepare review for next week