

# Cabinet Chronicles: Unraveling the U.S. Executive Departments

## Executive Branch, Cabinet, Executive Departments

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| **Grade Level** | 9th – 12th Grade | **Time Frame** | 125–150 Minutes |
| **Subject** | Social Studies | **Duration** | 3–4 periods |
| **Course** | U.S. Government | | |

## Essential Question

What are the President's Cabinet and the Executive Departments, and what role do they serve in the United States Government? How do the Executive Departments impact the lives of individuals through the implementation of public policy?

## Summary

In this lesson, students will research the role of the President's Cabinet and the Executive Departments in creating public policy. Students will explore the duties of the cabinet, then participate in a simulated activity to gain a deeper understanding of the role the executive departments play in our lives.

## Snapshot

**Engage**

Students classify statements about the decision-making process as "always, sometimes, or never true."

**Explore**

Students watch a video about the President's Cabinet, then create an anchor chart about one executive department.

**Explain**

Students complete a gallery walk and summarize the roles of each executive department in a graphic organizer.

**Extend**

Students further analyze the roles of the Executive Departments through an iCivics simulation game.

**Evaluate**

Students reflect on their learning by composing a two-minute paper that addresses the essential questions for the lesson.

## Standards

*Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))*

**USG.4:** The student will examine the Constitution of the United States by comparing the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government as they address the needs of the public.
**USG.4.2:** Examine the structure, functions,and authority exercised by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.
**USG.4.2C:** Explain the role of the executive branch, including the function of the bureaucracy in implementing public policy.

## Attachments

- Anchor Chart Checklist—Cabinet Chronicles - Spanish.docx
- Anchor Chart Checklist—Cabinet Chronicles - Spanish.pdf
- Anchor Chart Checklist—Cabinet Chronicles.docx
- Anchor Chart Checklist—Cabinet Chronicles.pdf
- Department Name Strips—Cabinet Chronicles.docx
- Department Name Strips—Cabinet Chronicles.pdf
- Department Poster Exemplar—Cabinet Chronicles.jpg
- Executive Command Note Catcher—Cabinet Chronicles - Spanish.docx
- Executive Command Note Catcher—Cabinet Chronicles - Spanish.pdf
- Executive Command Note Catcher—Cabinet Chronicles.docx
- Executive Command Note Catcher—Cabinet Chronicles.pdf
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—Cabinet Chronicles - Spanish.docx
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—Cabinet Chronicles - Spanish.pdf
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—Cabinet Chronicles.docx
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer—Cabinet Chronicles.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Cabinet Chronicles.pptx

## Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Poster exemplar (attached)
- Department Name Strips (attached, one per class)
- Anchor Chart Checklist handout (attached; one per group)
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer handout (attached; one per student)
- Executive Command Note Catcher handout (attached; one per student)
- Student devices with internet access
- Notebook paper
- Poster paper
- Markers

10 minutes

# Engage

Introduce the lesson using the attached **Lesson Slides.** Move to **slide 3** and share the instructional strategy Always, Sometimes, or Never True with your students. Explain to students that you will be sharing a series of statements with them and they should decide whether the following statements are always, sometimes, or never true.

As you go through the statements with students, have students raise their hands to reflect their responses. Invite a few to share their responses and explain their reasoning. Repeat this process for **slides 4–9.**

- *I go with my gut feeling when making a decision.*
- *I consider the potential consequences before making a decision.*
- *I take time to gather information and evaluate my options before making important decisions.*
- *I ask for advice from trusted people in my life before deciding.*
- *I take responsibility for my decisions, whether they turn out positively or negatively.*
- *I try to learn from past decisions to improve my decision-making process.*

Once you have gone through every statement, move to **slides 11–12** to introduce the lesson's objectives and essential questions.

### Optional Digital Integration: Setting Up Mentimeter

If you wish to use Mentimeter to poll your students use the following instructions:

1. Create your questions on Mentimeter.com.
2. Select "New presentation."
3. Title your presentation and select "Create presentation."
4. Explore the different options to create and share your Mentimeter.
5. Have your students open the app or go to menti.com and type in your custom code to connect them with the questions. Then, have them vote.

You can also use the K20 Center tech tool Mentimeter to set it up. Paste the new link into hidden **slide 10**.

60 minutes

# Explore

**Preparation Note: Department Name Strips and Anchor Chart Checklists**

Prior to the beginning of class, print the **Department Name Strips** (attached), cut them up, and place them in a jar for the students to select from. **This list is modified to only include 10 departments**. If you wish to use all 15 executive departments, include them in your list. The following site can be used as reference: The Executive Branch | The White House.

Prior to the beginning of class, print the **Anchor Chart Checklist** handout and cut into half sheets.

Display **slide 13** and have students watch a brief video, President's Cabinet.

**Embedded video**
https://youtube.com/watch?v=-bKT5rc6rsU

Once students have watched the video, move to **slide 14** and ask them to share what they noticed about the President's Cabinet and how it connects to their prior knowledge of the president's duties. Invite a few students to share out.

Transition to **slide 15.** Divide students into groups of three and introduce them to the Anchor Chart strategy. Explain to students that they will choose one of the executive departments to research and create an Anchor Chart over with their group. Go over the expectations as a class using the **Anchor Chart Checklist** handout (attached). Expectations can also be found on **slide 16**.

**Each poster should feature the following:**

- **Title/Bio:** Name of the department, year it was created, and name of the current secretary.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** List the daily functions and responsibilities of this department.
- **Current Initiatives:** List three current initiatives of this department.
- **Real-World Connection:** List three ways the department impacts your everyday life.
- **Historical Timeline:** Include a timeline featuring five major decisions, regulations, and/or impacts from this department.
- **Visual Representation:** Include an image or seal to represent this department.
- **Formatting:** Ensure your Anchor Chart is neat, organized, and uses your own voice.

Consider ending **Day 1** after reviewing expectations. Use **Day 2** as a work day. Once students complete their anchor charts, have students hang them around the room.

**Teacher's Note: Student Resources**

As your students research their chosen department, encourage them to use reputable sources to gather their information. The official website of their department is a great place to begin their research. All of the executive departments' websites can be found using the A-Z index of U.S. government departments and agencies.

20 minutes

# Explain

Begin **Day 3** by ensuring all posters are hung around the room. Display **slide 17** and introduce the instructional strategy Gallery Walk / Carousel. Distribute the **Gallery Walk Graphic Organizer** handout (attached) to each student and, as a class, review the expectations for each column. Instruct them to move around the room exploring the different executive departments. Direct students to fill out the graphic organizer as they rotate.

After students have completed their Gallery Walk, bring the class back together and invite students to share out which life impacts stood out to them the most, and any final thoughts.

45 minutes

# Extend

**Teacher's Note: Gameplay Preparation**

In preparation for the following game:

1. Go to icivics.org/getstarted.
2. Create a free account or log in.
3. Click the “play” button at the top of your browser screen.
4. Select *Executive Command*.
5. Scroll down and click the “Download Teacher Resources” button.
6. From the pop-up menu, select the Game Guide_Executive Command game guide. This will open a PDF to help facilitate the game.

By having an iCivics account, you can also create classes and track completion of students' gameplay, but that will require that students create a login account.

You may also choose to bypass creating an account, if you do not want to track students’ completion. To do this, have students complete steps 1, 3, and 4 above.

Display **slide 18,** and pass out the attached **Executive Command Note Catcher** to each student. Click on the link to iCivics and display the game, *Executive Command*, and start a new game. Model how to play the game for students for just a few minutes.

After modeling the game for the whole class, return to slide 18 and have students use their personal devices to access the game *Executive Command*. Provide time for students to play the game together while taking notes with the Executive Command Note Catcher. When students successfully complete the game, they are given a completion certificate. If desired, have students “print” their certificate, and choose “save as PDF” so students can submit their certificate via email or through an LMS.

5 minutes

# Evaluate

Display **slide 19,** which lists the two essential questions of the lesson. Have students take out a blank sheet of paper and write a Two-Minute Paper that addresses the two essential questions:

*What are the President's Cabinet and the Executive Departments, and what role do they serve in the United States Government?*

*How do the Executive Departments impact the lives of individuals through the implementation of public policy?*

Explain to students that they have two minutes to reflect on what they have learned as they revisit the essential questions. You can use the K20 Center 2 minute timer for this. Because of the short timeframe, reassure students that they do not need to worry about their papers being entirely grammatically correct. Rather, they should do their best to explain to you what they have learned over the course of the lesson.

### Assessment Options

There are several components of this lesson that could be used as a summative assessment of students' learning:

- Anchor Charts
- Gallery Walk Graphic Organizers
- Executive Command Note Catchers
- Two-Minute Papers

## Resources


- K20 Center. (n.d.). Always, sometimes, or never true. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/145
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Anchor charts. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/58
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery walk / carousel. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Mentimeter. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-minute paper. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). 2 minute timer [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/HcEEAnwOt2c?si=Sq130A8BJEoVIgin
- Untold History. (2023, Jun 27). *President's Cabinet* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bKT5rc6rsU.
- USA.gov. (n.d.). A-Z index of U.S. government departments and agencies. https://www.usa.gov/agency-index
- The White House. (n.d.). About the White House: Our government: The executive branch. https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-executive-branch/#:~:text=Fifteen%20executive%20departments%20—%20each%20led,administration%20of%20the%20federal%20government