

# What is Federalism?

by  
Brian McGuire and Rebecca N. Reed

**Lesson Description** This lesson is an introductory lesson to Federalism. Students are to discover what, how and why federalism is used in the United States. Students will demonstrate their understanding of Federalism by deciding which levels of government has the power to act in everyday situations.

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**End of Cluster Expectation (Benchmark) Addressed** **Civics 1b** - Students will analyze the different functions of federal, state, and local governments in the United States and examine the reasons for the different organizational structures each level of government employs.

**Focus Question** How and why are governmental powers diffused at the federal, state and local levels?

**Vocabulary:** diffuse, federalism, scale, employ.

**Objectives** Students will make logical decisions about how and why the powers of government are separated at different levels.

## **Prior Knowledge or Skills Needed**

Mastery of Delaware Civics Standard 1a and 1b for grades 4-5:

- Students will understand that governments have a variety of structures and exist for many purposes and that in America these are explained in the United States and State constitutions.
- Students will understand that the United States government is divided into executive, legislative, and judicial branches, each with specific responsibilities and powers.

## **Time to Complete**

Two to three 45 minute class periods.

## **Materials Needed**

- Bell Ringer - Overhead
- National Archives Cartoon Analysis Worksheet [adapted]
- Scissors
- Federalism - Reading 1
- Worksheet 1- Powers of Government – Intro Activity

- Worksheet 2 – Mindwalk
- Worksheet 3 – A Typical Saturday in Delaware
- Worksheet 4 – To Whom Would You Turn?

\*Answer keys for each worksheet are provided at the end of the lesson.

1. Distribute the **Federalism – Reading 1** handout. Have students read the handout then create a web which illustrates the diffusion of power among the 3 levels of government and the functions assigned to each level. When completed, students should use Reading 1 to self-correct the Powers of Government worksheet and permanently affix or write in the powers so that the worksheet can become a study guide. NOTE: The power to build roads is a “concurrent” or shared power, while the power to provide upkeep or repair of roads is a state or local power.
2. Once the students have corrected the Powers of Government worksheet be sure that all students have the correct powers listed under the corresponding level of government. Ask: Why do we have so many different levels of government. **Federalist – Reading 1** states that “The two major reasons for having several levels of government are scale and power.”
3. Reinforce the concept of federalism before moving on. Explore how power is diffused in a different but more familiar context. Have students describe the different levels of authority that they encounter in school. (Teacher, Principal, School Board) Help students to see that even in school settings there are different levels of authority, with each level assigned different powers. For example: Teacher powers include: assigning homework & seats, making-up procedures, directing instruction, etc.. Principal powers include: creating class schedules, determining the length of instruction and course offerings, setting a dress code, etc.. School Board powers include: setting attendance, promotion, & expulsion policies; generating funds, fixing bus routes, etc.. Return to the Bell-Ringer Activity. Ask students to reflect upon, then revise their original responses.

## DAY TWO

1. Begin class with a review of the previous day by asking students to name the three levels of government and to give examples of at least two powers that are assigned to each level. Then have students explain why a federal system of government is employed. Note that ‘employed’ in this context is a benchmark term from Civics standard 1b.
2. Distribute **Worksheet 2 – The Mindwalk**. Direct students to pair-up and read through the story and identify the level of government that would most likely deal with each of the items that are underlined. Allow for discussion between students about what level is most likely to have been assigned power over the items that are underlined. After 10-15 minutes, have students share and revise (if necessary) their answers.
3. Tell students that “effective” citizens need to develop an understanding of the powers assigned to each level of government because this understanding will enable them to find solutions to problems that require the help of government agencies, offices and officials. **Distribute Worksheet 3 – A Typical Saturday in Delaware**. Have students work with their partners to identify the level of government that would most likely deal with each of the items that are underlined. Discuss and revise (if necessary) the students’ responses.

4. **Distribute Worksheet 4 – To Whom Would You Turn?** Worksheet 4 may be used as a class or homework assignment. Ask students to read the scenarios on the worksheet and decide where they would need to turn to get help solving each problem. First, have them determine whether the problem falls under federal, state or local jurisdiction. Then, choose one or more of the government agencies listed under each of the three levels of government that *might* deal specifically with each problem. Have students share and revise their responses.

### **Debrief**

- How is power diffused in our federal system of government?
- Why is power diffused among different levels of government in the United States?
- Why might it be important for a citizen to understand how power is diffused?
- Give an example of a problem that might confront a citizen. Challenge other students in class to identify the level of government that would most likely to deal with that problem. Explain why that problem would fall under a given level of government. Encourage students to relate their answers to the concept of scale.

### **Tips for the Teacher**

1. It is important that students understand why different levels of government are needed and the justification behind the employment of powers. For example: Regulating trade between states can best be handled by a non-partisan group such as a federal government.
2. When completing the Cartoon Analysis, it may be helpful to create the overhead and discuss the visual aspects of the cartoon as a group. Then, have the students complete the questions at the bottom of the Cartoon Analysis paper. It might be beneficial to place questions A, B, and D directly under the cartoon on the overhead, and have them complete them on their on. You may want to complete question C as a group.
3. When completing Worksheet 1- Powers of Government, we found it was helpful to allow the students to work in pairs. After discussing Worksheet 1, we allowed the students to stay with their partner (group) to complete the Federalism – Reading 1, and go back and self-correct Worksheet 1.
4. For the question, “Why do we have so many different levels of government?”, it may benefit your students to have them record the answer (scale and power) in a notebook or binder to allow for easy referencing.
5. When completing Worksheets 2 (Mindwalk) and 3 (Typical Day...), it is imperative that students understand the task at hand. We found that after doing a few examples with the students, they seemed to have a much better understanding of what to do. Again, working in pairs seemed to be advantageous.

### **Extensions**

1. Students can write their own short stories and underline the powers of government apparent in the story and trade their stories with other students in the class. Students can then identify the level of government indicated and then returned to the author for correction and/or discussion.
2. Using a newspaper, have students identify the powers of government that are apparent in the articles. Have students look for a variety of articles that demonstrate governmental powers at different levels or just at one level.

**Citations**

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet – Adapted from the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Federalism Reading 1 – Adapted from Ben’s Guide to U.S. Government, a service from the U.S. Government Printing Office, <http://www.bensguide.gpo.gov>

Federalism Reading 1 – Adapted from Hackett, Steven C. and Deborah Keeth, Lesson Four from The North Coast Landscapes: Teacher's Guides and Lesson Units, Humboldt University. <http://www.humboldt.edu/~economic/landscapes/>

Mindwalk – Adapted from a lesson of the National Conference of State Legislatures. <http://www.ncsl.org/public/trust/lessonp3-M.htm>

To Whom Would You Turn? - Adapted from Levin, Marty, “Social Studies Lesson Plans: Citizenship and the Constitution” author: Tana Carney Preciado, CVAVTS, El Reno, OK <http://www.edu-orchard.net/PROFESS/LESSON/HISTORY/>

A Typical Saturday in Delaware – Adapted from Fairfax County Program of Studies, “Lesson Plan: Interconnections Between Private and Civic Life – Focus on the County”, <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/gov/omb/fcpos/030.pdf>

## Bell Ringer



*“Hello, is this the White House? May I speak to the President? I want to see if he can change the book bag rule at my school.”*



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### Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

<b>Level 1</b>	
Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.	1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.  2.
<b>Level 2</b>	
Visuals	Words
	3. Which words or phrases in the caption appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?  4. Describe any emotions portrayed in the cartoon.
<b>Level 3</b>	
<p>A. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.</p> <p>B. Explain the message of the cartoon.</p> <p>C. In what way does the cartoon point out a misunderstanding about government in the United States?</p> <p>D. Use your understanding of the American system of government to construct an appropriate response to the caller.</p>	

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adapted for this lesson

## Reading 1

## Federalism

**What is federalism?** Federalism is a system of government in which power is distributed or diffused between a central government and smaller political units. In the United States, there are three basic levels of government: federal, state and local. Each level has its own functions and powers as well as powers that are shared with other levels.

**How is federalism employed in the United States?** The federal government's powers are listed in the Constitution. The powers are listed for each branch of government. The federal government can print money, regulate trade between states, regulate international trade, make treaties, conduct foreign policy, declare war, provide an army and navy, and establish post offices.

Some of the state government's powers are to issue driving licenses, regulate trade within the state, conduct elections, ratify amendments to the Constitution, provide for public schools, and establish local governments.

In Delaware, there are various governments at the local level, including county and municipal (city) governments. These local governments have a variety of powers. Overseeing hospitals and libraries, weed control, fire protection, water supply, sewage, refuse collection and disposal, building construction rules and lighting of streets are some of the powers.

All governments share some powers. Collecting taxes, fees and fines are among those shared powers. Other shared powers include: building roads, establishing courts, chartering banks, making laws and taking private property for public purposes (eminent domain).

**Why do we have different levels of government?** The two major reasons for having several levels of government are scale and power. Each level of government deals with issues that are appropriate to its size or scale. For example, the federal level deals with national security and the declaration of war – issues that affect all of the people in the nation. The local levels deal with the upkeep and repair of streets – an issue that is only important to the people who live in that area. Another reason for adopting a federal system is that it is designed to distribute or break-up power and authority. This structural feature of government is designed to protect the people against the whims of one all-powerful ruler.

## Worksheet 1 Powers of Government

Each level of government has unique powers. Some of these powers are listed at the bottom of this sheet. Decide which power or role belongs to either the federal, state or local government. Place the power under the correct government title.

<b><u>FEDERAL</u></b>	<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>LOCAL</u></b>
<b><u>SHARED POWERS</u></b>		

<b>Building roads</b>	<b>Establish building codes</b>	<b>Make laws</b>
<b>Conduct elections</b>	<b>Establish local governments</b>	<b>Print money</b>
<b>Create fire protection</b>	<b>Establish post offices</b>	<b>Ratify amendments to the Constitution</b>
<b>Declare war</b>	<b>Issue driver's licenses</b>	<b>Regulate trade between states</b>

Eminent Domain	Maintain sewers	Set up hospitals
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## Worksheet 2

### The Mindwalk

I woke up today to the sound of my clock radio (1) at 6:30am. (2) I got myself out of bed and walked to the bathroom. I brushed my teeth and got a drink of water. (3)

I could not decide what to wear (4). As I began to get dressed I realized that my social studies class was going on a field trip (5) to a historic plantation. (6) I wasn't what the plantation was going to be like so I phoned (7) my friend to see what he was wearing.

After I finished dressing, I went downstairs and had some breakfast. Today I feasted on some bacon and eggs (8) with apple juice (9). After breakfast, I was on my way to school. Before I left my street, I dropped off a few bills in the mailbox (10) for my mother. I was then on my way to the bus stop where my school bus (11) picks me up every morning.

Before I got on the bus, I headed to the store at the corner to buy my lunch for the trip (12) When I was in the store I noticed the newspaper had an article about voter turnout in the primaries (13) At that moment I wished I was old enough to vote (14) in the presidential election (15). I eventually got my lunch, but realized that I had missed my bus.

I had to go ask my sister for a ride to school. She just bought a brand new Honda Accord (16) She agreed to take me, but only if I gave her a couple of dollars for gas (17). I agreed to pay for some for the gas as long as I got to control what we listened to on the radio (18). So I got in her new car, buckled my seatbelt (19) and we were on our way. The whole way I just sat and thought about how great it was going to be when I got my own driver's license (20).

On our way to school we saw a police (21) car pull over a car for speeding (22). The man who was in the driver's seat took out his cell phone (23) and placed a call. He did not look happy. I'm guessing he was calling work.. Traffic was very slow due to all of the potholes on the street (24). It was a very frustrating ride. I couldn't relax with all of the bumps in the road.

I arrived at school just before the homeroom bell. Our school day goes from 7:35 till 2:20 (25). I rushed right up to my homeroom class.

My homeroom teacher (26) always had extra copies of the newspaper in class. I borrowed one of his copies and began to read an article about the Delaware Congress. The article said that Congress was going to create stricter penalties for minors (27) who tried to purchase cigarettes and alcohol (28).

After homeroom I went to my social studies class. We were discussing the federal system. My teacher asked us how big a role, if any; the government plays in our lives. I thought to myself, "Not much, unless I decide to take up smoking...and we all know how unhealthy that is."

## Worksheet 3

## A Typical Saturday Afternoon in Delaware

My Saturday began very early. My alarm clock went off and the radio began blasting one of my favorite songs. I quickly turned it off because it was so loud. After lying in bed for a while, I got up and took a shower. Then, I went down stairs for breakfast. My father had made me some bacon and eggs, and I had some coffee with it. After breakfast I turned on the TV to Channel 25 to watch the weather. The weatherman said the government had issued an extreme heat warning for my area. I made sure I drank plenty of water before I left the house.

As I made my way out of the house, I realized that I had forgotten to take my allergy medicine, so I took my meds and was on my way. As I headed to the DART stop, I noticed the street was filled with potholes. Also along the way, I noticed they were building a new housing development. When I reached the bus stop, a policeman was giving a man a ticket for being parked in front of the bus. I hopped on the bus and headed to Route 13.

After I got off the bus, I headed down the street to the library. I picked up a book and was off. The heat was incredible! I became very thirsty, so I decided to stop at a friend's house. She had just gotten a new dog from the SPCA.

Before I headed home, I stopped by the YMCA of Delaware for a swim. As I walked home, the sun started to go down and the streetlights began to glow. I could hear the horn of an AMTRAK train in the distance.

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## Worksheet 4

# To Whom Would You Turn?

**Directions:** Read the following scenarios and decide whom you would need to contact to help solve each problem. First, determine if the problem falls under federal, state or local jurisdiction. Then, choose one or more of the choices listed under each of the three levels of government that might apply.

### **Federal:**

- Internal Revenue Service
- Post Office
- Social Security Administration

### **State:**

- Division of Motor Vehicles
- Environmental Protection Agency (DNRC)
- Delaware State Police

### **Local:**

- Commissioner of Voter Registration
- Department of Human Services
- Police Department
- Tax Assessor
- Board of Education

1. You have just moved into a new house and you need to get your mail forwarded to your new address
2. Your sister has just reached the driving age and wants to apply for her license
3. You have just obtained your first job and you need a social security number
4. Your parents want to add a room onto your house, but want to be sure your taxes won't increase too much
5. A friend of yours has been having some family problems and wants some help
6. Everyday night the band next door practices and it is very hard to concentrate and do your homework
7. The mother of the kid next door just received a ticket because he son was riding his bike without a helmet
8. Your brand new skateboard is stolen
9. Your brother just turned eighteen and wants to register to vote

10. Your mother wants to know if she can deduct the cost of donations to charity from her income tax

11. Your parents and friends do not agree with your district's new high school diploma system

## Answer Key

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### Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Level 1	
Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
2. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon. <b>Teenager, bedroom</b>	3. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title. <b>Caption, "Hello, is this the White House?..."</b>  4. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. <b>White House, President, principal</b>
Level 2	
Visuals	Words
	5. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? <b>"...I want to see if he can change the book bag rule at my school."</b> <b>Describes why the teenager wants to speak to the President.</b> 6. Describe any emotions portrayed in the cartoon. <b>Teenager is angry.</b>
Level 3	

- A. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon. **The teenager is calling the White House to see if she can speak to the President.**
- B. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols. **White House is where the President of the United States lives. She is a teenager and not an adult because she is speaking about having a principal and book bags.**
- C. In what way does the cartoon point out a misunderstanding about government in the United States? **The cartoon suggests that the caller does not understand that different problems are dealt with by different levels of government. Her problem is not a problem that would be handled by the federal government.**
- D. Use your understanding of the American system of government to construct an appropriate response to the caller. **“Thank you for calling. This is not a problem handled at the national level because it does not affect most Americans. May I suggest that you contact your principal or local school board to get help with this problem?”**

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## Answer Key

### Powers of Government

Each level of government has unique powers. Some of these powers are listed at the bottom of this sheet. Decide which power or role belongs either the federal, state or local government. Place the power under the correct government title.

<b><u>FEDERAL</u></b>	<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>LOCAL</u></b>
<i>Declare war</i>	<i>Conduct elections</i>	<i>Create fire protection</i>
<i>Establish post offices</i>	<i>Establish local governments</i>	<i>Maintain sewers</i>
<i>Print money</i>	<i>Issue driver’s licenses</i>	
<i>Regulate trade between states</i>	<i>Ratify amendments to the Constitution</i>	

<b><u>SHARED POWERS</u></b>		
<i>Building roads</i>	<i>Make laws</i>	<i>Set up hospitals</i>
<i>Eminent Domain</i>	<i>Establish building codes</i>	

<b>Building roads</b>	<b>Establish building codes</b>	<b>Make laws</b>
<b>Conduct elections</b>	<b>Establish local governments</b>	<b>Print money</b>
<b>Create fire protection</b>	<b>Establish post offices</b>	<b>Ratify amendments to the Constitution</b>
<b>Declare war</b>	<b>Issue driver’s licenses</b>	<b>Regulate trade between states</b>
<b>Eminent Domain</b>	<b>Maintain sewers</b>	<b>Set up hospitals</b>

**Suggested Answers**

**The Mindwalk**

1. FCC, Federal Licensing Laws
2. National Bureau of Standards
3. Clean Water Act
4. Federal Import Controls, Tariffs
5. Local School District Regulations, state law
6. National Historic Preserve, state law regarding historical preservation
7. Federal Communication Licensing Laws
8. Federal Pure Food and Drug Act
9. Federal Pure Food and Drug Act
10. Federal Postal Laws
11. State School Transportation Laws, local driving laws
12. Federal Pure Food and Drug Act

13. State Election Laws
14. Federal voting age requirements, U.S. Constitution
15. Federal voting requirements, State Election Laws
16. Federal Import Controls, Tariffs
17. Federal and State Gas Taxes, Federal Import Control Laws
18. FCC, Federal Licensing Laws
19. State Motor Vehicle Laws
20. State Motor Vehicle Laws
21. Funded by Local or State Governments
22. State or Local Driving Laws/ Speed Limits
23. Federal Regulations for Cell Phone Companies
24. State and/or Federal Highway Funds
25. State education requirements
26. State laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco/alcohol to minors
27. Federal/state Excise Taxes

### **Handout #3 Answer Key**

## **A Saturday Afternoon in Delaware**

My Saturday began very early. My alarm clock went off and the radio began blasting one of my favorite songs. I quickly turned it off because it was so loud. After lying in bed for a while, I got up and took a shower. Then, I went down stairs for breakfast. My father had made me some bacon and eggs, and I had some coffee with it. After breakfast I turned on the TV to Channel 25 to watch the weather. The weatherman said the government had issued an extreme heat warning for my area. I made sure I drank plenty of water before I left the house.

As I made my way out of the house, I realized that I had forgotten to take my allergy medicine, so I took my meds and was on my way. As I headed to the DART stop, I noticed the street was filled with potholes. Also along the way, I noticed they were building a new housing development. When I reached the bus stop, a policeman was giving a man a ticket for being parked in front of the bus. I hopped on the bus and headed to Route 13.

After I got off the bus, I headed down the street to the library. I picked up a book and was off. The heat was incredible! I became very thirsty, so I decided to stop at a friend's house. She had just gotten a new dog from the SPCA.

Before I headed home, I stopped by the YMCA of Delaware for a swim. As I walked home, the sun started to go down and the streetlights began to glow. I could here the horn of an AMTRAK train in the distance.

### Governmental Contact Points

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- radio began blasting (FCC, local noise ordinances/laws)
- shower, water (Clean Water Act)
- bacon, eggs, coffee (FDA, tariffs on imports)
- Channel 25 (FCC, local cable company)
- Extreme heat warning (National Weather Service)
- allergy medicine (FDA)
- DART (DelDOT)
- street with potholes (DelDot or county Dept. of Transportation)
- new housing development (county planning and zoning issues, HUD)
- Route 13 (DelDot, county Dept. of Transportation)
- library (run by the county)
- SPCA (run by the county)
- YMCA (state commerce laws)
- street lights glow (state and local energy laws, Federal Energy Regulatory Com.)
- AMTRAK train (Department of Transportation)

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS

#### Worksheet 4 Answer Key

## To Whom Would You Turn?

**Directions:** Read the following scenarios and decide whom you would need to contact to help solve each problem. First, determine if the problem falls under federal, state or local jurisdiction. Then, choose one or more of the choices listed under each of the three levels of government that might apply.

**Federal:**

- Internal Revenue Service
- Post Office
- Social Security Administration

**State:**

- Division of Motor Vehicles
- Environmental Protection Agency (DNRC)
- Delaware State Police

**Local:**

- Commissioner of Voter Registration
- Department of Human Services
- Police Department
- Fire Department

1. You have just moved into a new house and you need to get your mail forwarded to your new address **F-Post Office**
2. Your sister has just reached the driving age and wants to apply for her license **S- Division of Motor Vehicles**
3. You have just obtained your first job and you need a social security number **F-Social Security Administration**
4. Your parents want to add a room onto your house, but want to be sure your taxes won't increase too much **L-Tax Assessor**
5. A friend of yours has been having some family problems and wants some help **L-Depart. Of Human Services**
6. Everyday night the band next door practices and it is very hard to concentrate and do your homework **L or S - Police**
7. The mother of the kid next door just received a ticket because he son was riding his bike without a helmet **L or S - Police**
8. Your brand new skateboard is stolen **L or S - Police**
9. Your brother just turned eighteen and wants to register to vote **S - Commissioner of Voter Registration**
10. Your mother wants to know if she can deduct the cost of donations to charity from her income tax **F- IRS**
11. Your parents and friends do not agree with your district's new high school diploma system **L – School Board**

## Assessment 1: Extended Response

**Benchmark Statement:** Students will analyze the different functions of federal, state, and local governments in the United States and examine the reasons for the different organizational structures each level of government employs.

### Data



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### Extended Response Prompt:

With the existence of federal and state governments, why is a local government necessary? Explain your answer with an example.

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**Desired Response**

\_\_\_\_2- Local governments are necessary because the elected officials of a local government can deal with issues that are important only to the citizens of that area. For example, fire protection is a local issue and not a concern of the federal government. The type of fire protection needed will vary from area to area depending on the type of environment.

\_\_\_\_1- Local governments are needed because if we didn't have a local government, then all the power would go to one or two groups.

0- inaccurate or no response.

**Rubric**

- 2 - This response gives a valid explanation with an accurate and relevant example.
- 1 - This response gives a valid explanation with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no example.
- 0 - Inaccurate response.

**Assessment 2: Selected Response**

**Benchmark Statement:** Students will analyze the different functions of federal, state and local governments in the United States and examine the reasons for the different organizational structures each level of government employs.

**Selected Response Prompt:**

Which of the following is a power delegated only to the federal government?

- a. Funding a library
- b. Levying taxes
- c. Maintaining streets
- d. Printing money

**Desired Response = \_\_\_\_\_d\_\_\_\_\_**