

Lesson Plan: The President's Cabinet

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Featured resource

[KQED's The Lowdown: Trump's Cabinet](#)

Opening quick write prompt:

What do you know about how the president's Cabinet works? Who is currently in the president's Cabinet or nominated for a position? List at least three things you already know about who serves in the Cabinet and what their jobs are?

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.



PBS News Hour

Objective

- Students will analyze the roles and responsibilities of the president's Cabinet.
- Students will reflect on and evaluate President Trump's Cabinet picks.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

What are the role and responsibilities of the presidential Cabinet? Who is currently in the Cabinet or a nominee for a Cabinet post?

As referenced in the Constitution, the Cabinet advises the president on key domestic and international issues. There are 16 Cabinet positions, including the vice president. Though Cabinet members don't make laws, they do shape how the laws are implemented and direct how billions of budget dollars are spent.

President Trump's Cabinet picks are winding their way through the Senate. Some have been approved; others are awaiting confirmation. Almost all have garnered opposition from critics of the administration. This lesson asks students to analyze the responsibilities of Cabinet members and Trump's current Cabinet picks. Students then take on the roles of the sub-committees and Senate to "confirm" or "deny" the current Cabinet members and nominees.

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
Disclosure (n.)	Making information known, revealing something
Filibuster (v.)	An attempt to delay proceedings in the U.S. Senate or other legislative body by making a long speech or series of speeches
Nominee (n.)	Someone who is chosen for a job, position or political office
Respective (adj.)	Relating to people or things that have been mentioned
Vie (v.)	To compete with others in an attempt to get or win something

Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to discover what students already know about the Cabinet and current Cabinet picks.
- As a class or in small groups, students read [The Lowdown post](#) introduction (before the interactive).
- **Check for understanding:** What is the job of a president's Cabinet? Who confirms a president's Cabinet choices? What's distinctive about President Trump's Cabinet and nominee?
- Before transitioning to independent practice, write down the 15 Cabinet positions (not including the vice president) where everyone can see them. Explain that students will be researching Cabinet picks then recommending them to the whole class for a final vote.

Independent practice

- **Transition to independent practice:** Individually or in small groups, students choose two Cabinet positions they want to learn more about. Record their choices on the list. While students should have as much choice as possible, make sure all Cabinet positions are covered.
- Students read the description of the Cabinet posts in [the Lowdown post](#) and summarize the primary responsibilities of the two Cabinet positions they chose.

- Students prepare or write their own assessment of whether the Cabinet members they chose should be confirmed (or should have been confirmed, if they have already been confirmed).
 - Model this process, if needed: *We/I recommend _____ should/should not be confirmed as Secretary of _____ because _____* (Students cite evidence from [the Lowdown post](#) and other sources to support their opinions.)

Assessment/reflection

- Choose students to tell the class the role of each Cabinet member.
- Review the process by which Cabinet members are confirmed. Remind groups that they are like the Senate sub-committees. Each group will be recommending to the full class (Senate) how to vote. Have groups share their recommendations. Groups with the same Cabinet post don't have to agree. But each group should cite evidence to support its decision.
- After all the "sub-committees" have reported, go down the list again and have students act in the role of the Senate to vote whether or not to confirm or deny each nominee.
- **Reflection:** In writing or in a discussion, students respond to the following question: What should a president think about when nominating someone for a Cabinet position? 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 or Cabinet nominee through the first 100 days. [Using these resources and others](#), ask students to make a plan for how they can follow their issue through the first 100 days (the end of April).

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.