The Power of 3: Three Branches of Government

Students will explore the strongest shape as they learn about the three branches of government.

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Grade Level: 2nd
Duration: 1 class period

Overview
The United States formed a strong government when it became a country more than 200 years ago. Students will first explore which shape is the strongest and then will make connections to our three branches of government – forming a strong government to ensure our country is one of the strongest in the world.

Purpose
In this lesson students will determine the strongest shape and then will build a model to help remember the 3 branches of government.

Materials
• Background information and video links (see resources)

National Geography Standards
ELEMENT FOUR: HUMAN SYSTEMS
13. How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth’s surface.

Arizona Geography Strand
Concept 4 Human Systems
PO 6 Recognize the connections between city, state, country, and continent.

Other Arizona Standards
Strand Three: Civics/Government
Concept 2: Structure of Government
PO 1. Identify the three branches of national government (Executive, Legislative, Judicial) as represented by the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court.

Mathematics Common Core Standards
Geometry
2.G.1. Recognize and draw shapes having specified attributes, such as a given number of angles or a given number of equal faces. Identify triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons, and cubes. (Sizes are compared directly or visually, not compared by measuring.)

Standards for Mathematical Practices
2.MP.2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively
2.MP.4. Model with mathematics

Objectives
The student will be able to:
1. identify and build the strongest shape
2. name the three branches of government
3. identify the functions of the three branches

Procedures
Before class begins:
The Power of 3: Three Branches of Government

- Build a sample square, rectangle and triangle model for each group to explore and a large national and state government triangle to model.

1. In groups have the students explore the various shapes and determine which shape is the strongest. After a few minutes of exploration have groups share out their opinions and reasons. (The triangle is the strongest shape and does not collapse like 4-shaped figures. Many structures like bridges and large buildings use triangles because they can hold more weight and do not collapse)

2. Tell the students that today they will be learning about our government and the strong structure our Founding Fathers set up so that we would be a strong country even today. Watch No More Kings video clip to lead up to a discussion on why we just don’t have one person (the President) run everything.

3. Introduce the three branches of government using the terms:
   - Executive: The President carries out the laws.
   - Legislative: Congress makes the laws.
   - Judicial: The Supreme Court decides what the laws mean. Then watch the US Government Kid’s Edition ppt/video to learn about the 3 branches.

4. After the videos and discussion on a powerful government based on three branches of government, have students cut up their National Government triangle pieces. Have them read the information found on the triangle and write or draw on the back two things that will help them remember each branch of the government. Then have the students assemble the pieces into a triangle (see model) with the brads.

5. Show the students the State Government triangle and explain that our state government follows the same structure so that they have a strong government too.

6. Have students share out in pairs, small groups or whole class the three branches of government using their notes on the back side of their triangles.

Assessment

Students will complete the Power of Three assessment with 80% accuracy.

Extensions

Students can continue to research more information about the three branches of government.

Students can watch the Smart Song (Three Branches Rap found in sources).

Students can discuss three key people who help them become strong students (student-teacher-parent) and build a learning triangle.

Students can further explore the idea of triangles being a strong shape by building a toothpick or popsicle bridge using triangles.

Sources

School House Rock: Government – No More Kings
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oT7dMHAiCfs&feature=related

The US Government: Kids Edition Video/PPT
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5EASiHAKpY

Three Branches Rap: Smart Songs
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCB8EOY5d48&feature=related