

Making Civics Real: A Workshop for Teachers

SHOW 3: Public Policy and the Federal Budget

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:16 Annenberg/CPB Funding Logo (include :15 fades)

:06 SOTA Logo (includes :15 fades)

Open Sequence

Velazquez: If we're going to talk about citizenship, democratic participation, then we have to tailor our lessons to model that kind of behavior.

Title: Making Civics Real: A Workshop for Teachers

Student: May I please introduce the president of the United States...

Narrator: Engaged, reflective, concerned and collaborative – these are qualities we hope for in our citizens and in our classrooms. Constructivism is a theory of teaching and learning that helps teachers instill these qualities while also imparting real skills and knowledge.

Borges: A constructivist teacher is someone who builds on students' previous knowledge and previous experience.

Johnson: Petitioner will go first ...

Narrator: Constructivism incorporates a number of teaching strategies you are probably already familiar with like: simulations, debate, small group work, and socratic questioning.

Chandler You prepare a lesson that will allow students to bring reality to what they are learning.

Johnson: Each child brings something different and has looked at the material in a different way.

Martin: But they also build on what other students are saying.

Student: And here we have the lack of family which I think is the most important...

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Velazquez: The most challenging thing is being comfortable with letting students find their own way

Borges: If you make this decision, how will it affect high school students all around the country?

Narrator: This workshop profiles teachers who are effectively using constructivist strategies to address standards and cover diverse content areas. Cooperative learning appears throughout, but you will also see strategies like role playing, consensus building and service learning. The goal of this workshop is to give teachers new resources and ideas to reinvigorate civic education.

Show Title: Public Policy and the Federal Budget

EXT OF SCHOOL, KIDS WALKING IN HALL, INTO CLASSROOM

Narrator: West Forysth High School in North Carolina is a public school funded partially by the education budget of the federal government. But like most teenagers, students at West Forysth have only the vaguest idea how the budgeting process at the federal level works.

Martin: Good morning, good morning, good morning.

Narrator: Leslie Martin's 9th graders are about to find out – as they begin a unit on the Federal Budget that will give them a unique insight into the connection between the budget and the public policy priorities of our government.

Martin: Tech boys, get one of these lap tops and set it up.

L3: Leslie Martin, 9th Grade Economic, Legal and Political Systems

Martin: The class is a semester of Civics and American Government and then a semester of Economics. The economics portion deals with basic economic questions like supply and demand, as well as briefly touching on monetary policy.

Martin: Set em up in different corners of the room.

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Martin: The civics portion of the class is a history of how the Constitution was created and then how all those areas of government impact our lives. Ultimately, we want the students to understand the interplay between the government and the economy.

PA System: *Will you please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance?*

ALL: *[RECITING PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE]...*

Narrator: **The lesson begins with an introduction to the budgeting process. Students then work in small groups to create a draft national budget and present it to the class. Afterwards, they will look at the actual federal budget and revise based on what they have learned. Finally, the class will hold a simulated congressional session where each group will present their revised budget and field questions from students playing the parts of members of congress.**

Martin: This lesson also ties together the role of legislators with the responsibility to their constituents, but also the role of legislators to look for the nation as a whole. And sometimes that may create contradictions in what they choose to do or lead to compromise, which is what I want them to understand.

Activity One: Class Discussion of Government Budgeting Process

Martin: *All right, here's what we're gonna do the next couple days. Let's put out some papers when we take a little notes.*

Narrator: **One of the strengths of this lesson is the way Leslie Martin integrates teacher-directed instruction with small group work.**

Martin: *What is the importance of taxes when we're talking about the budget?*

Andrew: *That's the method of income.*

Martin: *For the?*

Andrew: *Government.*

Martin: *Government. The government has income. It also has what? What's the other side of the budget?*

Andrew: *Expenses.*

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Martin: Spending and expenses. Expenditure, right? Now we also talked about a structure for how the government budgets those—their expenses. We listed them on the side of the overhead. What was that structure?

Sarah: Give examples, Um, like the State Department, the Veterans Affairs.

Martin: The students have been prepared for this lesson in a variety of ways.

Michael: The Department of Treasury with IRS, Secret Service...

Martin: What we've done is review the budgeting process. When a President presents a budget, he sends it over to congress, there's some negotiation, they are familiar with entitlements and incremental budgeting in a very cursory way. They've read about it in their text book.

Martin: What did we talk about yesterday when we talked about the budget?

Alex: We talked about different types of taxes such as income tax and estate tax and...

Martin: I use text books in my class as a diving board. I use text books to give overviews, outlines, vocabulary, a base for what we're gonna talk about.

Martin: What was one of the big expenditures that we talked about yesterday?

Andrew: Social security and Med... No. Medicaid—care.

Martin: Care.

Andrew: Is it "caid" or "care"?

Martin: It's care.

Andrew: Care, okay.

Martin: Okay. We...

Martin: This lesson's over three days and on the first day we're going to simply introduce the budgeting process, review a couple of key terms.

Martin: What's fiscal policy?

Martin: I want to lay groundwork for having the students understand how a budget is created between the President of the United States of America and congress. But I also want them to understand, particularly in this first class, how the budget reflects their priorities.

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- Martin: *All right. The budget, I'm gonna divide you guys into groups, randomly selected, okay—randomly selected.*
- Martin: I teach the students that you don't get to choose who you work with and that everyone has something to add.
- Martin: *As a group, and we have lap tops for each group, I want you to use the structure of those 14 departments, just kind of as a starting point...*
- Martin: *In those small groups, they will act as if they are the President and a group of advisors who are developing a budget to present to Congress. So based on what you know, I want you to create your first stab at a budget. First of all, it's gonna be two trillion dollars, which is about what it's been in the last couple of years. Write it down. Two...*
- Martin: I purposely have not given them a great deal of detail because I would want to see what the kids actually know and how broad their thinking is.
- Martin: *Think about the fact that priorities, where the government spends its money reflects the government's priorities. Does a Republican President have a different agenda from a Democratic President?*
- Student: *Yes.*
- Martin: *Do Presidents have to look at what's going on in the country and in the world? Okay. This is the real live budget. Now what does Congress do with it?*
- Caitlin: *They go through it and they find all the details saying, "Oh, we don't like this, but we do like this so we can change it". And they go back and forth and negotiate, don't they?*
- Caitlin: *Yeah. And cut, basically.*
- Martin: *So today your job is to create the first draft of your budget. Someone in each group will have a President who will present the budget. I want at least one pie chart and a list of what your spending is like. And you can do it with percentages. And I want to have a one-page summary of your budget. Questions? All right. How 'bout we have Group One right here, Group Two right here, Group Three right here, Group Four right here.*

Activity Two: Groups Create Draft Budgets

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Martin: My role, as the teacher in a situation like this, is to set up a structure that they can learn within, that they can bounce off each other.

Adam: *We all are going to do our own budget*

Martin: *All put your own budget together. Pretend like you are the advisors.*

Martin: I went from group to group to make sure they were on task. Most very quickly listed the departments and started asking themselves where is the money going.

Martin: *Start writing.*

Alex: *If we come up with a big pool of things that we want—that we all agree on first and then go from there.*

Michael: *All right. Big things as in like education, defense, national debt.*

Garrett: *(Inaud.) national debt and the deficit, trying to fix that and balance it out.*

Michael: *I personally feel it needs to be paid off a lot, but it's just me. So...*

Yeah, it would take us like three years to pay it off if we just stopped everything.

Student: *We could just start with entitlements first since they are probably the biggest.*

L3: Michael

Michael: When it's small group discussions as opposed to a large group discussion everyone's talking, not blankly following along accepting the facts, spitting them back out, getting what you're told to do, doing it, but really getting initiative to do what you should be doing instead of just waiting to be told.

Sarah: *So if I was creating a budget in the United States we need to make sure we understand which departments are more stressed as far as figuring out what money is gonna to which department as far as like the Department of Treasury, the Department of Commerce. The Department of State is involved in many different things. They control immigration. They focus on countering international crime. What other departments do we really need to focus in on?*

Emily: *Defense and Health and Human Services because Defense especially lately so we can protect ourselves against other countries. Health and Human Services because that's Medicare and that's gotten really important in the last couple years especially since there's a large population of aging people who will need this support.*

Sarah: *All right. So what we're saying is that State, Defense....*

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L3 Sarah

Sarah: I love working in groups because it provides me with more input. Sometimes I'm not sure on the answer or what I think would be the most important and I want someone else's input. That really helps me.

Sarah: *So can I ask you a question? Since I have no idea about like as far as budget and how it's divided approximately how much is given to like—I mean I really don't even know where to start with it.*

Martin: *What I want you to do is I want you to make, and I understand that. You have nothing to base it on and that's what we're gonna talk about tomorrow. But this time what I want you to do is just pretend like you are the President. You are the presidential advisors and you have to create a budget from the beginning. So tell me what your priorities are.*

Emily: *I'm not sure what the one most important out of all those quite yet.*

Mandy: *I think the most important right now is the Defense Department.*

Sarah: *What exactly does the Department of Interior do?*

Martin: *The Department of Interior primarily manages our national parks. So our national parks and preserves land for the United States. Tell me what would happen if we didn't have the Grand Canyon as a national park? Imagine. Go back to your economic per...*

Emily: *Wouldn't the property value of that area be really high. So people would probably develop it. Because if there's no laws to keep people from like developing areas at*

L3: Emily

Emily: The budget I always thought it was just a bunch of law makers just sitting up there spending our tax dollars. I never thought all the good stuff it does do and how when you want funding for something you have to pull it out of something else.

Martin: *Let's pretend like they turn it in to a suburb, a sub-division—Grand Canyon Estates. Will you be able to see the Grand Canyon ever?*

Emily: *Definitely not.*

Martin: *Will you? Is there something about preserving our national treasures that is important to in kind of a broader image that we are more than just a nation about money, right? You're energy.*

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George: We're energy. I'm worried that if we put money into energy that we're gonna be continuing the same practices that we've been doing which is taking oil from the Middle East and with the projections on when the oil is going to run out we shouldn't be doing anything that should get us more dependent on it or we should put more money into research.

Martin: Probably the most challenging issue today will be keeping the students on task, having all the members of the group focus on building that budget. They may be distracted by the technology. They love working with computers. They may be distracted because some of them have been doing things late at night. Last night there was the dance concert. Some of them will be distracted and get off task from building a budget to solving the issues associated with the budget.

Andrew: I don't think we're ever going to solve the Middle East peace problem. I don't mean to be pessimistic, but this kind of goes back a long ways, I mean a long ways.

George: Isn't our interest in the Middle East contingent on oil anyway? So if we decrease our budget on oil we'll probably—or defense—we'll probably like it'll be reallocated somewhere else. We probably won't need as high of a defense budget. I mean with OPEC and all the treaties aren't we basically defending our oil? Isn't that our main interest?

Martin: What I want to suggest and I want to take you back to the budget. Rather than solve a problem in the Middle East right now—is that a somewhat different but affiliated issue? The first step would be to make us less dependent on oil. Now can you take Defense spending and put it in different areas where it will do different things. What other department would you put spending in if you...

L3 George

George: She'll ask you a question and she'll just stop short of giving the answer and she'll never give you the answer but we always have to figure it out. It makes you think a lot more.

Martin: What/who deal with it outside the country? Secretary of State. Who's the Secretary of State right now?

Katie: Colin Powell.

Martin: Colin Powell. Do you remember when Bush sent him over to try. Yeah. He tried to deal with the Middle East issue. So lots of goals.

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- George:* But aren't we creating overall policy and not just a budget?
- Andrew:* We have to fund our policies. Not fiscal policy. That's—but political policy like what our agendas and what we want to do and what we said during our campaigning which is what the budget—we have to get funding for that somehow.
- Martin:* That's the point. Budget with its priorities is a reflection of your beliefs and your policies. That is exactly it. So almost what has to come first? The discussion of the...
- MS:* ...overall policy.
- Martin:* Overall policy. That's why that red, white and blue book is so thick. This is why I propose this.
- Martin:* When I first started thinking about group work and small group work particularly the first year or two I taught I was overwhelmingly frustrated. I know that it's good for the students. I'll be honest that I really avoided it sometimes. But this year I said you know I need to do this.
- Tony:* What else have you put so far? What was the last one?
- Martin:* Yes I can lecture. Yes I can give notes off the board. Yes I do do this sometimes. But it is the hands-on activities, the building activities. They take it internally, and then they have to spit it back out in the form of a lesson, a paper, interaction with other students. It's really engraved on their memory. That's the key.
- Caitlin:* So do we want to go ahead and make your outline for your speech.
- Derrick:* Sure.
- Caitlin:* Or do we want to write the speech? How do you want to start off? It needs to be a persuasive beginning. Also this is the President so you're gonna have that whole cheesy stuff like Michael was talking about how welcome Americans.
- Derreck:* Dear members of Congress.
- Caitlin:* Would they say dear?
- Derreck:* Greetings. Greetings. I don't know. Usually in speeches they start out giving the three key points or something like that. So...
- FS:* Three key points.
- Derreck:* Yeah. So what do you think?
- FS:* What do you mean by three key points?
- Derreck:* Just like aspects that you're trying to cover during the speech.
- Caitlin:* Exactly because you're gonna have—obviously September 11th. What else would we have?

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Derreck: Probably recession.
Caitlin: Definitely, yeah. How does the recession affect our budget?
Derreck: Well there's less spending currently because...
Caitlin: What are we doing to try and help the recession throughout our budget?
Derreck: Well, we're providing like Workers Compensation so that people can try to get jobs because a lot of people are unemployed now. So maybe they'll try and get jobs and go out—and by spending they stimulate the economy.

L3 Andrew

Andrew: First I thought oh making a budget was really simple. Then things pop up and you realize that oh, you can't do everything that you want with a set limit.

Katie: How much do we really need for Veterans Affairs?
Annie: How much do we need for Treasury?
George: Give Veterans Affairs like .25 percent.

Andrew: I wanted to fund certain sections more than others. Then I realized well other people want to fund different sections. So it was a mess.

Michael: Can't be giving these huge chunks to everyone or by the time we get to the bottom of the list we'll be out of money and in huge debt.

Garrett: We can't give them like these ten/fifteen percent grants of the budget because if we do that we're gonna run out of money in like the next five minutes.

Martin: I was thrilled with the way the class went. The students were mostly on task. They seemed to go after it with really strong interest. Every single group was really working on building that budget. Every group was in a different place.

Michael: If we're gonna do a budget they need to know where our income's coming from so it would probably be coming from taxes or....

Martin: One group was actually looking at the income side and the spending side. While I gave them a budget of two trillion dollars that they had to balance they were like now where does the money come from and how do we have to pay that out? Another group there was a leader who said yes, what do you think about this? She would look around and everybody would agree. One group not only did they end up talking about energy standards from a conservative and a liberal

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perspective they actually said to me you know I think we were just about one second off of compromise.

Michael: Under Justice would you put things like the new Air Marshall Security...
MS: That's homeland security.

Martin: Other group ended up talking about pulling in an NPR article on the Crusader that he had heard this morning. They ended up talking about do we need weapons like this? Do we need them for Defense? Do we need them just to say that we have them and had a brief discussion about Defense spending and what we needed. So the interactions were all different, but they seemed to be on task in every single group and I was very pleased with that. Partly I suspected and would have laid money on the fact that a couple, probably five or six, would have gone on the web and found the real budget.

Martin: Are you guys okay?
MS: Yeah.

Martin: Tomorrow what I want you to have, the Presidential speech be four minutes. Do it before you come in. Then I want a presentation preferably in Power Point that shows—remember how people think. Pie chart with the numbers. Then your speech needs to talk about why you have the budget you have.

Martin: Within each group I made sure that they had a president who would present the budget and that they recognized that a speech is not just this is my budget but a persuasive speech. Who has to buy into this? Is it the senators? Is it the Congress? Or is it constituents? How does the President get support for his budget? I gave them some guidance, but I actually want to see if they recognize how this is done and how effective they can be at persuasion.

Caitlin: So we have something sort of almost like creative. I'm not saying that Power Point isn't creative, but I'm saying like something to keep definite interest but I don't know if you don't want to like have that much time taken up.

Martin: The President of the United States of America.

Caitlin: Okay, never mind.

Martin: Think State of the Union.

Martin: So Derrick, a tie would be a nice thing.

Derreck: I wore my suit again.

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Martin: You gonna wear your suit, Michael?
Michael(2): You want me to? Andrew, yeah I think so. I'm gonna have to do a bunch of tinkering with it though.
Tony: Okay remember, e-mail us. You got the e-mails?
Andrew: Yeah. I got the e-mails. I put them in (inaud.).

Activity Three: Groups Present Draft Budgets

Martin: Who wants to set up the VCR gold? Michael, suit. Very nice, very nice. Looking very presidential.
Oh, you're Secret Service for the President. All right, knock yourself out.

Derreck: We need our laptop.
Caitlin: Thank you and God bless. That's perfect.
Garrett: Look at that.
Michael: Chart one, chart two emphasizing the individual parts, and chart three showing the divisions of our entitlements.
Alex: Okay. I think that covers everything quite thoroughly.
Adam: We left off some zeroes. That's all millions.

Martin: Today we started the budget discussion. We had some things I had not anticipated. Two students weren't there. One of the diskettes was unreadable. One of the computers didn't have a power cord to hook it up and the battery of course was dead.

Andrew: Tony, did you get rid of my Power Point presentation? Where is it.
Martin: Put it on top of my government book since Michael told me not to put it on my computer.
Martin: You ready?
Michael: Almost there.

Martin: Loads. I'm always surprised at how long just opening up a file takes. Standing up there the screen is blank and the file is opening, opening, opening. For me that's wasted time like tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.

Michael: This is the general overview of the budget we proposed. Due to the recent tax on the (unint.) on September 11th we feel like many of our fellow Americans that

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America must have defenses to prevent any future attacks. For this reason we've given a hundred and forty billion dollars for direct funding to the military, and we've given an additional forty billion to the newly created Homeland Security to prevent any terrorist attacks.

ARCHIVAL

Martin: My father thought that girls should be teachers. That way they can have a little pocket money but be home to support their husbands. I didn't buy into that argument but I did discover a love of history in my college years. At the same time the popularity of the MBA was also on the rise. I applied and was accepted at Duke University. Years later I felt like that I had done most everything I wanted to do in the corporate world.

Michael: *We are giving a hundred million dollars per year to pay off the national debt and after ten years we will be able to save 70 million dollars per year on interest alone. Which can be returned to you the taxpayers.*

Martin: I really enjoy working with the students. I love the energy they bring to the classroom. I love the unpredictable on what they know and don't know.

Michael: *and the American dream will be better realized with improvements in education, insuring that we maintain the position of the best country in the world.*

Martin: *All right. Thank you Mr. President very much. (Applause) Briefly, any questions for clarification for President Swafford (ph.)?*

Mandy: *How much were you planning to give to healthcare and Medicare and stuff like that?*

Michael: *Basically that was included in entitlements. But we also gave an additional twenty billion dollars for....*

Martin: Being a citizen is so much more complex than going to the voting booth and punching a chad. It involves gathering information, making informed decisions, listening to the talking heads, listening to the people you respect, analyzing that information, understanding compromise, understanding who is gonna be the best person to represent you and then making the choice.

Tony: *May I please introduce the President of the United States.*

Andrew: *Good morning.*

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Martin: I believe that constructivist's strategies create the best citizens because it involves all of those in a structured and safe environment. Reading, analyzing, talking, listening and making choices.

Andrew: *Due to the conflict in the Middle East currently it's important that the United States weans itself off oil. Therefore our policy is to make the United States more self-sufficient in growing food, creating energy and manufacturing own goods. This is the percentage of our spending. We're devoting 12% to education, energy and defense.*

Martin: Whether it's voting, whether it's knowing who is running for office or even volunteering, the roles of being a citizens are many and diverse. If we can't teach that in schools we're not doing our jobs. Yes, you have to take tests. Yes, you have to write papers. But ultimately I will achieve my goal if you are a good citizen in terms of all of the different things that it means.

Andrew: *The Veteran Affairs fund has been cut due to the amount of veterans from wars decreasing rapidly in previous years and with the very small threat of war in the future. We're trying to stop war from happening anywhere. The Department of Veterans Affairs will continue to decrease.*

Martin: *Time. Okay. Do we have any questions for clarification?*

Adam: *What about entitlements and things like that? Are those not included in your budget?*

Andrew: *That really falls under Health and Human Services. We really want to wean our population off of using so much Medicare and Medicaid—I get those—Medicare, I'm sorry.*

Martin: At the end of the year the students will take a test based on the standards that I have been given. They literally say the student shall understand, analyze and see the impact of government in the economy.

Martin: *We have here today President Marcy and his secret service agent who I should not be acknowledging.*

Martin: In terms of the standards I think I'm constantly trying to weave them in. Rather than saying "This is the standard you have to know. This is what you have to know", I just connect them.

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Derreck: Greetings members of Congress. The time has come for my administration to propose its budget plan to take effect in October of 2003.

Martin: And that for me is much more hands-on. Much more relevant and also much more difficult to teach.

Derreck: Where are we getting our money? How do we plan to distribute it? How has September 11th effect our budget proposal and how has the nations current recession effected how the budget will unfold for years to come.

Martin: Part of what I'm doing as a ninth grade teacher is I am teaching basic concepts and skills that these students will apply the next level and the next level and the next level.

Activity Four: Class Discussion of the U.S. Federal Budget

Martin: Let's look at the real budget, okay? I'm gonna give you two different things. First of all I'm going to pass out some vocabulary words. Now some of you all have used them already. Everybody take one blue sheet.

Martin: I have to teach them some basic vocabulary words, and I don't know if they may already know them. I think they used the word "discretionary". They used the word "defense", but does it match to what we're talking about. And sometimes, particularly this kind of student, they hear all the words, they listen to the news every night but they're not sure exactly what they mean.

Martin: It talks about discretionary spending. Off the top of your head, someone tell me what that means. To spend at your discretion.

Mandy: Doesn't discretionary spending mean whenever you'd like it, like whatever you feel like spending?

Martin: It's money you actually have control over. Okay, does that makes sense to you?

Mandy: Uh huh.

Martin: Are there monies in the budget that the government technically or realistically does not have control over? Someone who has not participated.

Emilye: Entitlements.

Martin: Good.

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Emily: Like Social Security or Medicaid.
Martin: Tell me why the government doesn't have control.
Emily: Because the people who are on Social Security have already paid money towards their Social Security, so they're entitled to that money back.
Martin: What I want you guys to begin thinking about is the different between what the government can control and cannot control. Did many of you, when you started your budget, start... You built your budget from the ground up, is that true? Does the real President have that choice?
ALL: No.
Martin: No. Somebody tell me why.
FCaitlinS: The budget is almost kind of like a test for the President. It kind of shows where—what he thinks is important. And the press and the public's gonna be seeing that. And so if he does something radically different as opposed to year's past, then he's—no matter what, there's always gonna be someone who's not gonna be happy with that change.

L3 Caitlin

Caitlin: I had very little knowledge of the budget. I kind of really even didn't think about it. It was one of those things "I don't have to deal with it. I shouldn't worry about it". However, seeing it as it does affect me now, it's one of those learning processes where you're finally taking the emphasis off yourself and looking around.

Martin: What you, Caitlin, have just hit on... I wanna make sure you guys understand this. Go ahead and write it down. It's called "incrementalism". Doesn't the President have to take the previous budget and build on it? Does it apply to discretionary as well as non-discretionary or entitlement spending?

Martin: After we've set some ground work with those basic definitions, I'm gonna send em back to their groups to revise the budgets. Now those revisions will be based on two pieces: one, what the other groups did because they should be learning from what the other groups said. Is education a priority? Did we forget this? What about that. And then also what the previous budget said. Because the real budgeting process is based on what came before.

Martin: What budget are we working on right now? The budget for?
ALL: 2003.

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Martin: When the economy goes down, do people say, "Okay, we don't have enough money to pay. We don't pay more taxes so it's okay if we get fewer services"? No. What happens when the economy goes down, we actually use more government services. More people...

L3: Michael

Michael: Before this year, the only part of the paper I read was the comics and the sports section.

Michael: What they're saying is how much of what the country spends per year is...

Michael: Now, after this, the very least I do in the morning is read what the main headline is, just learn more about what's going on on the world stage.

Martin: Next one, the federal budget. And you guys got this, a plan for how the government spends your money. When I did the discussion of President Bush's 2001 budget, it took longer than I anticipated.

Martin: What is the largest outlay?

MS: Isn't it Social Security?

Martin: How much?

MS: Twenty-three percent.

Martin: Time management is a balance that you do every day, every week, every month. I constantly have to monitor myself and say, "Where are we? Where do we have to go?".

Martin: I want you to go back into your groups and revise your budgets based on what I have given you. Go back. Look at discretionary versus non-discretionary and re-work your budgets as best you can. You guys did great today.

Activity Five: Group Revise Budgets

L3: Tony

Tony: We were very shocked at this fact that Medicare receives 23% of the budget and that when we only allocated 6% of our budget towards health and human services

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alone, and that covers Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, we were like—we were way off. We knew that we were so far off.

Andrew: It's not that. It's just that I wanna get rid—I wanna wean ourselves off of Social Security cause it's such a big—such a big cut of our income.

George: We gotta... We keep it where it is.

L3: Andrew

Andrew: Compromise is a hard thing. I realize that. And I never actually had to face it until this year. And I think that in the end it usually works out okay, in the case of me and George where we were both trying to get the same goals, we just wanna take different methods to get there.

Andrew: I mean, everybody has 401Ks and stuff, and if we're gonna make ourselves more sufficient... Also, that I think we are a capitalistic system. I don't think the government should be intervening as much as it can be.

Martin: Let me interrupt for just a second. Making a hundred thousand dollars a year, can you put money in there? If you're making twenty-five thousand dollars a year, can you put money in your 401K? I understand your point about wanting to wean people off government assistance. No problem. Andrew, what is it about Social Security that is going to make it so hard to cut it?

Andrew: So many people—is it so many people depend on that or...

Martin: Well, they depend on it because they paid for it. If I may be so bold, Mr. Phelps, I'm gonna retire before you do, right?

Andrew: Uh huh.

Martin: And I'm gonna say to President Phelps... You have to get elected, right? "I paid into Social Security for 45 years".

Andrew: And you don't get anything out of it.

Martin: Are you cutting my benefits?

Martin: My original objective in having them create a budget from scratch and then revise it was to force the kids to see that you don't live in a perfect world. There are other things and other constraints that came before you.

Andrew: Actually, out it back, good health and human services. Knocks that up to about... Think about this for a minute, all right?

Andrew: We're already paying a ton of that. I didn't realize it was that much.

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- Annie:* *Yeah, we didn't have enough of that (inaud.)...*
- Tony:* *That's gonna be... We need to make that a 15.*
- Tony:* *More?*
- George:* *More.*
- Annie:* *No. George! Then we're gonna have go move everything else down.*
- Tony:* *Look at the federal budget.*
- MS:* *Social Security is the single-highest budget increment in the budget right now. But like if we...*
- Tony:* *Then health and human services is the highest.*
- Martin:* I do kind of want them to have an emotional reaction. I want em to be annoyed or ticked off that they don't have as much leeway. Would I change that? Probably not because I think that literal process and that recognition that you have to deal with all those issues, what the Presidents before you, what the Congress before you did, and that you really only have a little bit of leeway. While frustrating, it's part of what you have to deal with.
- Andrew:* *Where are we now?*
- Annie:* *So what are we gonna cut down?*
- George:* *I'm not sure, but we gotta cut something.*
- Annie:* *We need to cut the agriculture down.*
- Tony:* *Look for veteran's affairs.*
- George:* *You wanna ask for more taxes?*
- Annie:* *No.*
- Annie:* *No.*
- Tony:* *Raise taxes just a little bit.*
- Annie:* *Yeah, but if we raise...*
- Tony:* *Because we're sponsoring so much new stuff and...*
- Martin:* Tomorrow I want to change it up a little bit. Have one or two presentations with a final budget, the President and his or her advisors. And at that point, the rest of the class, probably 15 students, will take on the role of a legislator. Each of the students before this had identified a legislator mostly Senators and they had to research the focus of that particular Senator. Who were his or her contingents, what loyalties did he have, what issues did he have to look at. And each child is familiar with the key elements or the key focus of that particular legislature. So it turns more into the President interacting with Congress.

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And I expect that the President will have to address difficult questions. Wearing that hat the Legislator hat, they are now looking at the budget from a different piece. It is a much more adversary role and it is also a role. It is more reflective of what really happens. Am I taking care of my own? That guy up there needs to pay attention to me.

Martin: *Remember you have a two page paper due about this process on. I told you. Don't look blank. Yeah I did.*

Activity Six: Groups Present Revised Budgets to Congress

Martin: *What we're gonna be simulating now is in a smaller fashion that discussion between Congress and the President. Does it happen like this? No. But does it happen between the different agencies? Do Congress members want certain things for their state and for their nation? Yes. Do we have hundreds of different opinions in Congress? Yes. And we here have the President who is trying to represent his overall view. So after we have the presentation of his budget, we will have a time period for a question and answer session. Okay? Everybody all right? So take notes. You can ask clarification questions, as well as why didn't you questions. Okay?*

Michael: *Greetings, Ladies and Gentlemen of Congress. Here we have before you the proposed budget from the Executive Branch.*

Martin: If somebody wanted to try this particular lesson, creating a budget from scratch, I would advise them to do a couple of things. Get a sense for what their students know about the real world. Just say, how is the budget created? I would suggest that they keep some back-up information in case their students are floundering so you can help ground them and then tie it back. But I think you also wanna make sure that they have some basis and understanding of the way government and the economy work, as well as the priorities and the roles of the President.

Michael: *Are there any questions of allocation?*

FS: *I'm representing Senator Chaffe (ph.) from Rhode Island he is a Republican. And my question is ask—well, how they're-- are they going to control inflation with the attempt to pay off the national debt?*

Michael: *My advisors in the O&B will be better able to answer that question if any of them cares to answer.*

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Alex: *All right. Well, I will take this question. We believe this administration, we can control inflation by only paying small amounts of national debt back over a large period of time.*

L3 Alex

Alex: From this experience with, you know, preparing a budget, I learned so much about the budget and everything, the long process it takes, and I wouldn't have learned any of this if I was either being lectured at by a teacher or reading it out of a book. I wouldn't—I wouldn't have gotten it as well as I did with this experience

Andrew: *I'm representing Fred Thompson. He's the Republican Senator from Tennessee. My question is they're funding an artillery project and I wasn't aware that we were going to be invading any other countries.*

Alex: *The reason we are putting so much money towards defense is...*

Alex: This class has taught me, you know... I can, you know, share my opinion. My confidence has really increased from this experience and I probably will, you know, really step forward and be more vocal in upcoming, you know, occasions where we do something like this, which is good because, you know, I need to be doing stuff like that.

Martin: *Today we have President Phelps and his staff of advisors to present their plan for spending for the government in 2003 fiscal year.*

Andrew: *Good morning, Congressional members. Thank you for taking time out of your...*

Martin: Today's lesson went pretty well. It started off a little slow but picked up.

Andrew: *The United State's imports outnumber its exports by a large margin, nearly half, and...*

Martin: I almost think that in the first presentation the kids were a little more reticent or they didn't know as much about the issue or know what they were supposed to do.

Andrew: *And the Veterans Affairs funding and Transportation has been cut due to the Veterans from (unint.)...*

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Martin: And then in the second presentation they were more willing to jump in. And I'm not sure if it's because the issues were more interesting to them or they knew more about the issues or they saw something to compare it to.

Martin: *The floor is now open for questions from the Congress. Identify yourself.*

Alex: *Okay. I am Ted Kennedy, a Democrat from the state of Massachusetts. Your plan stated that you would like to lean off of oil from the Middle East. Does... By doing this, does this mean you are looking to drill in Alaska and wildlife refugees.*

Andrew: *We are thoroughly against drilling in the Alaskas because of the fact we don't like to destroy our nature, destroy our natural parks up there. We think that if we get off oil completely, we'll be able to decrease the world pop...*

George : *It'll be shifting our economic resources, which will also control our defense so that we won't be contingent on the Middle East for our energy.*

L3 George

George: Sometimes you have beliefs and you need someone to sort of clarify exactly what you stand on things. She understands that a lot of the kids, including myself, they know sort of what they feel about things, but they don't know exactly where they stand on some of these issues. And by giving us someone where we can, you know, research the Senator, we can find out what he believes on something and we can, you know, say "Well, this sort of does mirror ourselves" with someone.

Caitlin: *I'm Senator Mikalsky from Alaska, and since you said you are against drilling and it would run out in the next 10 years, what are you gonna do about the lost—the people who are gonna lose their jobs? Are you going to provide funding to—like you do for tobacco farmers?*

Andrew: *Well, what we want to try to do is mo—slowly move jobs from the old industry to the new energy sources we find, but we don't actually plan on killing off all the oil industries. We also... We're trying to make oil industries that are really concerned with energy convert to cleaner energy sources by imposing higher efficiency standards and imposing stiffer taxes on the oil industry.*

Derreck: *I am Josh Humera (ph.) and you commented on using alternative, renewable energy sources. What kind of energy sources will you be using and how will you implement them?*

Andrew: *In California there's—you've seen—all of you have seen pictures of the windmill farms out there. Basically, we would like to set this up all along our coast due to the... I don't know what the scientific method is called for that. But... And that*

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will allow us to create energy and hopefully stop the rolling blackouts that are current in California at this present time.

Kevin: I'm Senator John McCain from Arizona. I have a question about your energy policy. Are the windmill farms the only new sources of alternative energy that you all are gonna be implementing?

Andrew: No, they're not. Actually, we have the solar panels in the desert regions of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

Kevin: The windmill turbines, they're supposedly fairly inefficient. Are you going to be researching new types of efficient turbines? And they're also harmful on the environment cause birds fly into them and damage them.

Andrew: (Unint.), one of my advisors, would like to answer that.

Tony: Well, as my other advisor, Annie Morowsky (ph.), pointed out, we are causing a forced evolution to making the birds a little bit smarter than flying into windmills.

Martin: I think I'd do a couple things differently. I don't think they had enough time to create better budgets. I would have asked them to write their speeches a little bit more. I might actually ask the kids in the same group to be the devil's advocate and to say, "Okay, if you're presenting this to a group of adversaries, not the choir preaching to the choir, but people that might not agree with you, what kinds of questions and how are you going to answer them?"

FS: Hi, I'm Senator Susan Collins from Maine, and my question is how can you decrease funding to Veteran Affairs when our vets need more, not less, health care?

Annie: Well, mainly there's not nearly as many left as there used to be. They're all getting really old and dying. Well, they are. Plus like—plus like they're all... I don't know, they're just really old and there's less of em, so we just need less money. When there's less of em, you need less money.

Sarah: I'm Senator Paul Sarbanes from Maryland and I wanted to comment on what had just been mentioned earlier about the health care. Because the veterans are getting older and they are getting to the age where they are, you know, becoming more ill, then wouldn't they need more funding for their health care because of their old age?

Andrew: Department of Veteran Affairs mostly assists with claims and different—all sorts of things, and I think that our Medicare and Medicaid coverage would be applicable or would be more than enough for our aging veterans.

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George: As the veterans are getting older, they are qualifying for Social Security also, and we plan to include them under our Social Security budget.

Emily: I'm Senator Clinton from New York and I was saying that usually when you fight in a war and you get your Veterans benefits or whatever, that falls under a separate category than Medicare. And you're... That's sort of like another separate entitlement. It's like it's what you get for fighting in the war. And you're saying that they're getting less and for no particular reason?

Andrew: They're not getting less, there's just less of them.

Garrett: Yes. I'm Senator Bob Graham from Florida. And I don't know if you're really aware of this, but in my home state of Florida we have an incredible amount of veterans living in my home state. And I have witnessed over the years the—let's see, the mistreatment they've been receiving and the inability for them to receive their health care and the protection that they need for their health. And I just am having a hard time believing that you would actually cut the fundings to these people that are in desperate need of their health care and any other benefits that they might receive.

Katie: Part of our Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid and other entitlements...

Martin: After all of this is done, I'm gonna ask the students to write about the process, what they expected, what was different from what they expected, what they learned and how it affected their perception of that budget process and, ultimately, how democracy works for them not only in Washington, D.C. but also at home here in North Carolina.

Martin: All right. I have to call this question and answer session to a halt. The President has other meetings and things to attend to in the West Wing of the White House. Good job, Mr. President.

Activity Seven: Class Debriefs on Budget Process

Martin: Okay. Everybody have a seat. We apparently love this adversarial part of the process, yes? All right, talk to me a little bit about what we did today, either about Michael or Andrew's budget, about what you saw happening. Describe it.

Mandy: I like the part of Michael's budget where they're paying off the national debt. I liked how they were setting aside some money. I thought that was good.

Martin: Okay. Good. Somebody else.

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Michael(2): You had us play the role of senators and in turn we started to nit-pick their budget just the way it happens in the real world.

Emily: I think I see why it takes them so long to pass a budget because there's just so many ideas clashing with each other. And you have to make so many compromises in all the different departments and all the different funding.

Alex: We put together a budget in about an hour, and I thought like as long as they took that it was ridiculous. And then I saw today who we just sat here and bombarded them with questions and how hard it must be to put together a budget that everyone agrees with.

Martin: Who said lobbyist? Who said lobbyist?

Caitlin: Me.

Martin: I think that this lesson really met my goals even more than I anticipated. I think they really got a feel for the dynamic between the President and Congress, the adversarial nature of the budget-making process. We've talked about how long it takes to make a law and why it is so important that it takes so long. Because you have to get every single person's opinion to adjust it and to make sure it's a good law.

Martin: What were some of the first things that Andrew said? Okay, what did he turn his focus from? What to what? He turned his focus from outward to?

MS: Inward.

Martin: Inward. What is that term when they turn from...

Derreck: Internationalism.

Martin: No.

Derreck: Isolationism.

Martin: What does it mean?

Derreck: It means relying on yourself more and not letting other countries dictate what you're going to do, and just basically self-sufficient inside the country.

Martin: Okay. You're actually stepping away from globalism and decreasing the role that America plays in the world?

MS: Yeah.

Katie: Wow!

Martin: Go on, Katie.

Katie: I just said, "Wow!".

Martin: Why'd you say that?

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Martin: It seems like kind of a radical concept just to pull ourselves out of a world that we seem like we're so much involved in.

Martin: I'm still skeptical and nervous about group work. But each year I've become more comfortable not only with the key concepts that I want the students to have, but also moving from my curriculum to a moment where I can talk to the students about real issues and then reading those back together.

Caitlin: Doesn't that, however, kind of contradict what we said earlier. Like when we were talking... Who did that essay? We were talking about trading helps promote peace. So that's gonna be globalism in trying to...

Martin: I've had some tremendous flops, but I also have had some great successes. When the kids come and say, "You know when you said this or we did this, I really got it", then I know that it's worked.

Caitlin: I personally liked their budget, especially for the environmental concerns. However, I feel in real life it might not be passed, especially considering since it was so radical.

Martin: What power does Congress have? If they don't like the President's budget, what do they do?

Tony: Adjust it.

Martin: Say it again.

Tony: Adjust it.

Martin: They adjust it. But what's the power of the... [BELL RINGING]. You gotta stay for this. Just give me one second. What power does Congress have? The power of the?

FS: (Inaud.).

Martin: Money. Who authorizes the payments? Congress. Congress. Okay.

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