



# **TOPIC 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

GRADE 8 CIVICS LOCAL-LEVEL CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE TASK



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# INTRODUCTION TO THE MCAS GRADE 8 CIVICS ASSESSMENT

## MCAS GRADE 8 CIVICS ASSESSMENT

The MCAS Grade 8 Civics assessment offers multiple, interrelated components to assess students' understanding of civics and the foundations of the Massachusetts and U.S. governments. The test provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their civic knowledge and skills through an in-depth exploration of topics from the [Massachusetts 2018 History and Social Science \(HSS\) Curriculum Framework](#), while also presenting a comprehensive indicator of student and school performance on the breadth of the standards.

The MCAS Grade 8 Civics assessment has two components: (1) a state-level performance task, and (2) an end-of-course (EOC) test. The state-level performance task aligns to one of the seven civics topics from the grade 8 standards and the EOC test covers the breadth of the standards.

To help prepare students for the state-level performance task, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has created local-level classroom performance tasks for each civics topic. This document describes procedures for the local-level task. (See the [Grade 8 Civics Test Design document](#) for additional information about the State-Level Performance Task and the End-of-Course test.)

## LOCAL-LEVEL CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE TASK OVERVIEW

The local-level classroom performance tasks are designed to model best practices for classroom assessment and complement the content and skills that appear on the state-level performance task. Similar to the state-level task, each local-level task focuses on one topic from the grade 8 standards and assesses both content and practice standards.

Local tasks should be completed **after** regular instruction has occurred for the topic being addressed. These tasks include group work and discussions about the civics topics. In addition, the tasks ask students to analyze and evaluate sources to describe and explain civics concepts. Students will also be expected to write answers to questions related to the task topic. DESE will not collect student work or scores for these classroom tasks. Teachers may use these tasks for either formative or summative purposes in the classroom.

## NOTE TO TEACHERS ABOUT THE LOCAL-LEVEL TASK MATERIALS AND TIMING

The local-level task materials include a task summary and standards alignment, task directions, presentation slides, student handouts, and scoring rubric and notes. These materials have been reviewed and edited by the MCAS grade 8 civics educator review committee. In addition, a bias and sensitivity educator review committee has also reviewed the materials. The student handouts may be printed or distributed digitally for students to complete on a computer. To prepare to administer the local-level task, teachers should read through all materials, including the scoring notes, *prior* to administering the task to students. Although the tasks incorporate group work, each student should complete their own handout(s).

The time given to complete each part of the task is an estimated time. DESE estimates that, on average, each task will take one to two 50-minute class periods. It is important for teachers to review all the materials and estimate the amount of time it will take their students to complete the local-level task, and adjust the timing as needed.

Although the tasks have been developed with the input of grade 8 civics teachers, DESE recognizes that classroom work may be different depending on the classroom context. Therefore, teachers may modify tasks and adapt them to their classrooms as needed. Modifications may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- adapting materials including sources, presentations, instructions, or student handouts for additional clarity for specific populations (such as English learners)
- changing the scoring notes by adding additional student answers
- incorporating previous class work during discussions
- administering a task in more than one class session

## TOPIC 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

### TASK SUMMARY

For this task, **Topic 2: The development of the United States government**, students will analyze, discuss, and explain how the concept of natural rights influenced the development of the United States government. The standards that will be addressed are listed below.

### STANDARDS ADDRESSED

#### Practice Standards

- 8.PS.1. Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- 8.PS.3. Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- 8.PS.4. Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.
- 8.PS.5. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.
- 8.PS.6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.

#### Content Standards

- 8.T2.1. Apply knowledge of the history of the American Revolutionary period to determine the experiences and events that led the colonists to declare independence; explain the key ideas about equality, representative government, limited government, rule of law, natural rights, common good, and the purpose of government in the Declaration of Independence.
- 8.T2.2. Analyze the weaknesses of the national government under the Articles of Confederation; and describe the crucial events (e.g., Shays' Rebellion) leading to the Constitutional Convention.
- 8.T2.3. Identify the various leaders of the Constitutional Convention and analyze the major issues (e.g., distribution of political power, rights of individuals, representation and rights of states, slavery) they debated and how the issues were resolved.
- 8.T2.4. Compare and contrast key ideas debated between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists over ratification of the Constitution (e.g., federalism, factions, checks and balances, independent judiciary, republicanism, limited government).
- 8.T2.5. Summarize the Preamble and each article in the Constitution, and the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights; explain the reasons for the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution in 1791.

### TIME

There are three components to this local-level classroom performance task.

1. an activator discussion to be completed as a whole class (5 min)
2. small-group work (40 min)
3. a short whole-class discussion (5 min)

Teachers may vary the time for each component as needed.

## MATERIALS

- Task directions and scoring notes (for educators only)
- Slides with activator image and student directions (for educators only)
- Handout 1 (one for each student)
- Handout 2 (one for each student)

## LOCAL TASK DIRECTIONS

1. At the beginning of class, provide students with the following directions for the class period, which teachers may modify as needed:

“We will complete two activities to consider the events and experiences that led to the development of the U.S. government. First, you will explain how an event led to the American Revolution. We will then discuss those events as a whole class. Next, you will work with a small group to read, discuss, and analyze the information and sources on Handout 2 about how the U.S. government took shape. Finally, the whole class will have a discussion.”

2. Activator Images (5 min)

- Distribute Handout 1 to each student.
- Project the Activator Image to the class.
- Read aloud the directions for the Activator Image on Handout 1:

“Two of the events that led to the American Revolution are shown. Select one event and explain how it helped lead to the American Revolution. Use the information provided in the illustrations to support your explanation.”

- Tell students to complete Handout 1. Then, ask a few students to share their answers with the whole class and discuss.

3. Small-group work (40 min)

- After the activator discussion, assign pairs or groups of 3 students, varying the abilities of students in each group. You may assign roles to students, such as reading the questions aloud in their group, providing an initial answer to a question on Handout 2, keeping track of time (timekeeper), sharing out the group’s answers with the whole class, or other roles that are used in the class for group work. Have students move into their groups. Students may also work independently as needed.
- Distribute Handout 2 to each student.
- Explain to students that they will read the information and examine the sources on Handout 2 and then work with their group to answer the questions below each source. You may use the following instruction (modify as needed):

“Examine the information on Handout 2. Then work with your group to answer the questions below each source.”

- Each student should complete their own handout, but the group should discuss their answers.

- Teachers can answer questions that arise from the discussions but should not provide the answers to questions on the handout.

#### 4. Whole-class discussion (5 min)

- After the groups have completed their handouts, ask the students in each group to summarize their answers to one question and share out with the whole class. Discussion questions may include the following (you may modify these as needed):
  - How did the new U.S. Constitution resolve some concerns the Founders of the U.S. government had based on their experiences under British rule or under the Articles of Confederation?
  - Which issues remained unresolved with the creation of the U.S. Constitution?

#### 5. Scoring

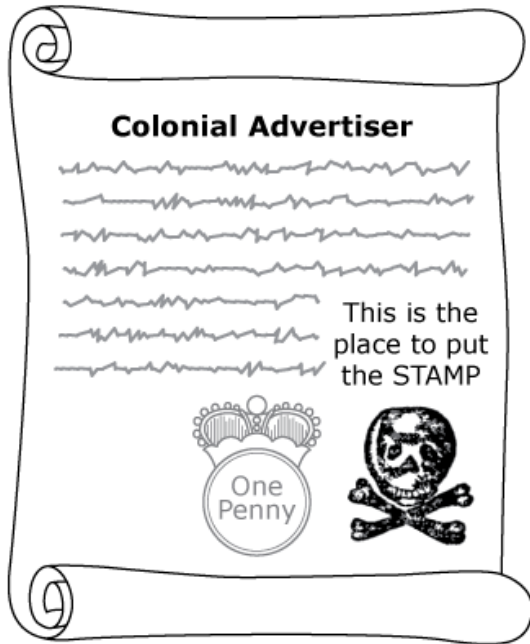
- The Scoring Notes may be used to facilitate and evaluate the whole-class discussions as well as to evaluate individual student work after the task is complete.
- Teachers may collect the completed handouts and grade student responses based on the Scoring Notes.
- Teachers may choose to go over any parts of the task that students did not understand (either during the group discussion and/or after the handouts are graded).



Massachusetts Civics Local-Level Classroom Performance Task  
Topic 2: The Development of the United States Government

Activator Images

The Stamp Act of 1765



The Boston Massacre, 1770

