



TOPIC 5: THE CONSTITUTION, AMENDMENTS, AND SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

GRADE 8 CIVICS LOCAL-LEVEL CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE TASK



This document was prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

© 2023 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes.
Please credit the "Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction to the MCAS Grade 8 Civics Assessment 3
 - MCAS Grade 8 Civics Assessment 3
 - Local-Level Classroom Performance Task Overview..... 3
 - Note to Teachers about the Local-Level task materials And timing 3
- Topic 5: The Constitution, Amendments, and Supreme Court Decisions..... 5
 - Task Summary 5
 - Standards Addressed 5
 - Time 5
 - Materials 6
 - Local Task Directions..... 6
 - Handout 1: Expanding Voting Rights for Women in the United States 8
 - Handout 2: Supreme Court Case Study 1..... 9
 - Handout 3: Supreme Court Case Study 2..... 11
 - Handout 4: U.S. Supreme Court Case Study Analysis 13
- Scoring Rubric and Notes for Teachers..... 15

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 tasks. (See [Grade 8 Civics Test Design](#) 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 a 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. 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:

- 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, or
- administering a task in more than one class session.

TOPIC 5: THE CONSTITUTION, AMENDMENTS, AND SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

TASK SUMMARY

For this task, **Topic 5: The Constitution, Amendments, and Supreme Court Decisions**, students will analyze and discuss primary and secondary sources to explain the importance of the U.S. Constitution changing over time. 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.6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.

Content Standards

- 8.T3.3. Describe the respective roles of each of the branches of government.
- 8.T5.2. Explain the historical context and significance of changes in the Constitution, including key amendments. Examples of amendments include the:
 - a. 14th Amendment (1868): citizenship rights, equal protection of laws
 - b. 19th Amendment (1920), women’s right to vote in federal and state elections
 - c. 26th Amendment (1971): lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 in federal elections
- 8.T5.5. Explain the principle of judicial review established in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) and explain how cases come before the Supreme Court, how cases are argued, and how the Court issues decisions and dissents.
- 8.T5.6. Research, analyze, and report orally or in writing on one area (a, b, or c, below) in which Supreme Court decisions have made significant changes over time in citizens’ lives.
 - a. Interpretations of freedom of religion, assembly, press, petition, and speech under the First Amendment.
 - b. Interpretations of the due process clause and the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
 - c. Interpretations in cases where individual rights and perceived community or national interests were in conflict.

TIME

There are three components to this Local-Level Classroom Performance Task.

1. an activator discussion to be completed as a whole class (5-10 min)
2. small-group work (25-30 min)
3. a short whole-class discussion (5-10 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)
- Handouts 2 and 3 (each student should receive either handout 2 or 3; the handouts should be distributed equally between groups)
- Handout 4 (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:

“In small groups, you will be completing two activities about the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. First, you will analyze a timeline and answer questions on how the Constitution was changed to expand voting rights for women. Then you will examine a Supreme Court case and answer questions about how the Supreme Court’s interpretations of the Constitution have led to changes in people’s lives. Finally, groups will share their answers with the whole class.”

2. Activator Image (5-10 min)
 - Assign groups of 3 or 4 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 the Handout, 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 1 to each student.
 - Read aloud the Overview and Directions for Handout 1.
 - Tell students to complete Handout 1. Then, ask a few groups to share their answers with the whole class and discuss.
3. Small group work (25-30 min)
 - After students have completed Handout 1, distribute either Handout 2 or Handout 3 to each student. Each student in a group should receive the same handout. Tell students to read and discuss the Supreme Court case described in their handout.
 - Next, distribute Handout 4 to each student. Tell students to work together in their groups to answer the questions on the handout. 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 (5-10 min)
 - After the groups have completed their handouts, ask the students in each group to summarize their answers and share out with the whole class. The discussion should consider the ways in which the U.S. Constitution can be changed and interpreted, ensuring that students make

connections to broader themes, including the roles that the legislative and judicial branches played in extending civil rights.

5. Scoring

- The Scoring Notes may be used during the whole-class discussions (to facilitate and evaluate the discussions) and may also be used 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).