



TOPIC 7: FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND NEWS/MEDIA LITERACY

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 [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, 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 7: FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND NEWS/MEDIA LITERACY

TASK SUMMARY

For this task, **Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy**, students will use the Case Study sources to analyze, discuss, and explain a public policy issue and its connections to the freedom of the press. 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.T7.2. Give examples of how a free press can provide competing information and views about government and politics.
- 8.T7.5. Explain methods for evaluating information and opinion in print and online media (e.g., determining the credibility of news articles; analyzing the messages of editorials and op-ed commentaries; assessing the validity of claims and sufficiency of evidence).
- 8.T7.6. Analyze the point of view and evaluate the claims of an editorial, editorial cartoon, or op-ed commentary on a public policy issue at the local, state, or national level (e.g., a mayoral or school committee decision, an action by a state legislature or Governor, a vote in Congress or an action by the President).

TIME

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

1. activator (10 min)
2. small group work (40 min)
3. a whole-class discussion (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)
- Handout 2 (one for each student)
- Handout 3 (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:

“You will complete three activities about the freedom of the press. First, we will analyze a political cartoon about a local town issue and answer the question on Handout 1. Next, you will be divided into small groups to analyze several sources on Handout 2 about a public policy issue in the fictional town of Cloverville. You will work in your groups to answer the questions on Handout 3, and then each group will share their answers with the whole class.”

2. Activator Image (10 min)

- Distribute Handout 1 to each student.
- Project the Activator Image to the class.
- Read aloud the overview and directions on Handout 1.
- Tell students to turn to a partner and analyze the political cartoon. Students should then complete Handout 1. 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 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 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 Handouts 2 and 3 to each student.
- Explain to students that they will work in small groups to read, analyze, and discuss sources about a sidewalk issue in the fictional town of Cloverville.
- Read the overview and directions on Handout 2.
- Tell students to read the sources on Handout 3 and complete the chart on Handout 2 as a group. Each student should complete their own handout, but the group should discuss their answers.
- When students have completed the chart, ask students to answer Question 1 on Handout 2 individually.
- Then tell students to complete the rest of the questions on Handout 2 together in their group.
- Teachers can answer any questions that arise from the discussions but should not provide answers to the questions on the handout.

4. Whole class discussion (10 min)

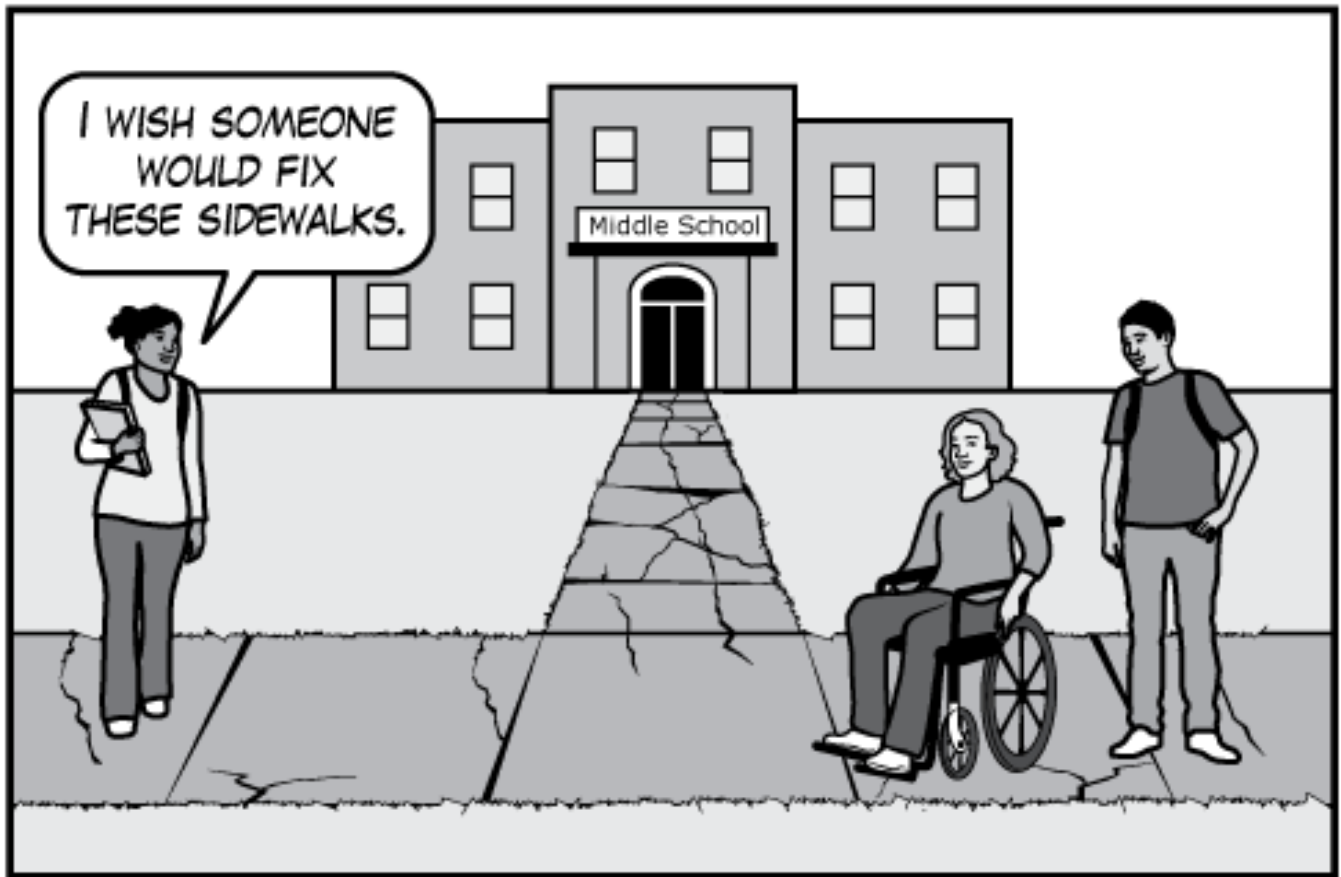
- After the groups have completed Handout 2, ask the students in each group to summarize their answers and share out with the whole class. Discussion questions may include the following (you may modify these as needed):
 - Did your group vote in favor of or against the proposal to improve sidewalks? Why did your group vote the way that it did?
 - Why is freedom of the press important for a democratic society?

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 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy

Activator Image



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