



Social Studies

in Washington State

Checks & Balances

Grades 6 - 8

OSPI-Developed

Assessment

A Component of the
Washington State Assessment System

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Introduction

To Washington State Educators of Social Studies:

Welcome to one of our OSPI-Developed Assessments and this implementation and scoring guide. This document is part of the Washington assessment system at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

The assessments have been developed by Washington State teachers and are designed to measure learning for selected components of the Washington State Social Studies Learning Standards. They have been developed for students at the elementary and secondary levels. Teachers from across the state in small, medium, and large districts and in urban, suburban, and rural settings piloted these assessments in their classrooms. These assessments provide an opportunity for teachers to measure and evaluate student growth; they can both help teachers determine if learning goals have been met, and influence how teachers organize their curricula. They also provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have gained.

These assessments provide:

- Immediate information to teachers regarding how well students have acquired the expected knowledge and skills in their subject areas.
- Information that can lead to continued strengthening of teaching practices.
- Resources that enable students—as part of the learning experience—to participate in measuring their achievements.

This document includes the following parts:

- directions for administration
- the student’s copy of the assessment
- scoring rubrics

Our hope is that this assessment will be used as an integral part of your instruction to advance our common goal of ensuring quality instruction for all students.

If you have questions about these assessments or suggestions for improvements, please contact:

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CHECKS & BALANCES

An OSPI-Developed Assessment

Social Studies
Grades 6 - 8

Overview

This document contains information that is essential to the administration of *Checks & Balances*, an OSPI-Developed Assessment for civics. If this assessment is being used as a summative assessment to determine if specific social studies learning standards have been met, then prior to its administration, all students should have received instruction in the skills and concepts needed to achieve the standards.

This assessment may be used as an integral part of instruction; as such, it may be used as a formative assessment, summative assessment, culminating project, part of an alternative education packet, part of a lesson plan or unit of study, a pre- or post-assessment, or as an individual student portfolio item. In short, OSPI encourages the use of this and other OSPI-Developed Assessments to support deep social studies learning in line with our Washington State Learning Standards and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Synopsis of *Checks & Balances*

To prevent abuses of power, those who helped to found our nation developed the system of checks and balances.

Students will develop a reasoned position on the effectiveness of this system in relation to one current or historical event.

Test Administration: Expectations

- The skills assessed by this item should be authentically incorporated into classroom instruction.
- This assessment item is to be administered in a safe, appropriately supervised classroom environment following district policy and procedures.
- All industry and district safety policies and standards should be followed in the preparation and administration of any OSPI-Developed Assessment.

- Accommodations based upon a student’s individualized education program (IEP) or 504 Plan may require additional modifications to this assessment.
- Additional modifications to the administration of this assessment may be required to accommodate cultural differences, diversity, and religious mores/rules.

Description of the Performance Assessment

Checks & Balances requires students to demonstrate their abilities as effective citizens by writing essays or creating presentations in which they describe a current or historical event and evaluate the actions of our branches of government as they relate to the event.

- The task requires the student to choose and research an event, noting the specific actions of our branches of government.
- The task requires the student to state a claim and support it with evidence from multiple informational texts.
- The task requires the student to consider the actions of the branches, a check, and whether those actions created a balance by preventing a different branch from exercising too much power.

Learning Standards

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts	Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence	Dimension 4: Communicating and Taking Informed Action
developing questions and planning inquiries	civics economics geography history	gathering and evaluating sources developing claims using evidence	communicating and critiquing conclusions taking informed action

Washington State Standards—Social Studies Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs): Grade Level Expectations (GLEs)*.

GLE 1.2.1 7 th Grade	Understands and analyzes the structure, organization, and powers of government at the local, state, and tribal levels.
GLE 1.2.1 8 th Grade	Understands and analyzes the structure and powers of government at the national level.
GLE 1.2.2 8 th Grade	Evaluates the effectiveness of the system of checks and balances in the United States based on a historical event (1776–1900).
GLE 4.3.1 8 th Grade	Analyzes the multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events in U.S. history (1776–1900).
GLE 5.4.1 8 th Grade	Uses sources within the body of the work to support positions in a paper or presentation.
GLE 5.4.2 8 th Grade	Uses appropriate format to cite sources within an essay or presentation.

CCSS Literacy—Reading History/Social Studies (RH/SS); Speaking and Listening (SL)

CCSS RH/SS 1 6 th –8 th Grades	Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
CCSS RH/SS 2 6 th –8 th Grades	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
CCSS RH/SS 8 6 th –8 th Grades	Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
CCSS SL 1 6 th –8 th Grades	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

*In a cohesive paper***: CCSS ELA Standards—Writing History/Social Studies (WHST)

CCSS WHST 1 6 th –8 th Grades	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
CCSS WHST 2 6 th –8 th Grades	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
CCSS WHST 4 6 th –8 th Grades	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS WHST 7 6 th –8 th Grades	Conduct short research projects to answer a question drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
CCSS WHST 9 6 th –8 th Grades	Draw evidence*** from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

***In a presentation: CCSS ELA Standards—Speaking and Listening
History/Social Studies (SL)***

CCSS SL 3 8 th Grade	Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness and sufficiency of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
CCSS SL 4 8 th Grade	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

***If implemented using technology: CCSS ELA Standards—Writing
History/Social Studies (WHST); Speaking and Listening (SL)***

CCSS WHST 6 6 th –8 th Grades	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as interact and collaborate with others.
CCSS WHST 8 6 th –8 th Grades	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
CCSS SL 5 6 th –8 th Grades	Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

*OSPI recommends that this classroom-based assessment be used at a particular grade level. If the assessment is used at another grade level within the grade band (3–5, 6–8, 9–12), the GLEs may need to be adjusted to match the content.

**Students may do either a paper or a presentation in response to the assessment, provided that for either format, the response is documented in such a way that someone outside of the classroom can easily understand and review it using the rubric (e.g., a video recording of the presentation or an electronic written document).

***Definition: *Evidence* in the CCSS refers to facts, figures, details, quotations, or other sources of data and information that provide support for claims or an analysis and that can be evaluated by others; should appear in a form and be derived from a source widely accepted as appropriate to a particular discipline.

Assessment Task

Teacher's Instructions to Students

1. Say: "Today you will take the Grades-6–8 Washington OSPI-developed social studies assessment for civics. This assessment is called *Checks & Balances*."
2. Provide the class with copies of the student's section of the assessment (which may include the student's task, response sheets, rubrics, templates, and glossary), along with any other required materials.
3. Tell the students that they may highlight and write on these materials during the assessment.
4. Have the students read the directions to themselves as you read them aloud. We also encourage you to review the glossary and scoring rubric with the students.
5. Answer any clarifying questions the students may have before you instruct them to begin.

Accommodations

Refer to the student's IEP or 504 plan.

Student's Copy of the Task

The following section contains these materials for students:

- the student's task: *Checks & Balances* (Grades 6–8)
- assessment rubric
- worksheets and handouts (optional)

Checks & Balances

To prevent abuses of power, those who helped found our nation developed the system of checks and balances. You will develop a reasoned position on the effectiveness of this system in relation to one current or historical event.

Your Task

In a cohesive paper or presentation, you will:

- State a claim that evaluates whether the system of checks and balances worked during the event by evaluating whether the system prevented one branch from exercising too much power.
- Provide background on the event by describing the event.
- Provide background for the claim by explaining how branches of government exercised constitutional powers during this event (include two or more examples).
- Provide reasons for your claim that include an explanation of how one branch checked or could have checked another (include two or more examples to support the position).
- Refer explicitly in the paper or presentation to three or more credible sources that provide relevant information:
 - Cite your sources when you draw information from them: for instance, when you summarize, paraphrase, or quote, and when you refer to facts, figures, and ideas.
 - Provide complete publication information for each source in your bibliography or list of works cited.

Checks & Balances Rubric

Score	4	3	2	1
Claim	<p>I stated a claim that evaluates whether the system of checks and balances worked during the event:</p> <p>I evaluated whether one branch prevented another branch from exercising too much power, affecting the functioning of government.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>I addressed how this imbalance impacted the rights of citizens.</p>	<p>I stated a claim that evaluates whether the system of checks and balances worked during the event:</p> <p>I evaluated whether one branch prevented another branch from exercising too much power, affecting the functioning of government.</p>	<p>I stated a claim regarding how the branches of government functioned during the event, but did not evaluate whether one branch prevented another branch from exercising too much power.</p>	<p>I discussed the system of checks and balances without stating a claim.</p>
Civics Concepts	<p>I provided background on the event by describing it AND accurately explaining how branches of government exercised constitutional powers during this event. (Includes three or more examples.)</p>	<p>I provided background on the event by describing it AND accurately explaining how branches of government exercised constitutional powers during this event. (Includes two examples.)</p>	<p>I provided background on the event by describing it AND accurately explaining how a branch of government exercised constitutional powers during this event. (Includes one example.)</p>	<p>I provided background on the event by making a reference to branches of government, but did not accurately explain how the branches acted during this event.</p>
Evidence/Reasoning	<p>I provided reason(s) for the position, supported by evidence, which includes:</p> <p>An accurate explanation of how one branch checked or logically could have checked another.</p> <p>Three or more examples.</p>	<p>I provided reason(s) for the position, supported by evidence, which includes:</p> <p>An accurate explanation of how one branch checked or logically could have checked another.</p> <p>Two examples.</p>	<p>I provided reason(s) for the position, supported by evidence, which includes:</p> <p>An accurate explanation of how one branch checked or logically could have checked another.</p> <p>One example.</p>	<p>I provided reason(s) for the position, but no supporting evidence,</p> <p>OR</p> <p>I did not explain accurately how one branch checked or logically could have checked another.</p>
Sources	<p>I referred explicitly in the paper or presentation to four or more credible sources that provide relevant information</p>	<p>I referred explicitly in the paper or presentation to three credible sources that provide relevant information</p>	<p>I referred explicitly in the paper or presentation to two credible sources that provide relevant information</p>	<p>I referred explicitly in the paper or presentation to one credible source that provides relevant information</p>
Citations	<p>I cited sources properly within the paper, presentation, and bibliography using a specific format.</p>	<p>I cited sources adequately within the paper, presentation, and bibliography.</p>	<p>I cited sources minimally within the paper, presentation, and bibliography.</p>	<p>I cited sources incorrectly within the paper, presentation, and bibliography.</p>

No Score (NS) is given if the work is unintelligible, in a language other than English, off topic, off purpose, or copied.

In this section, you'll find:

- Checks & Balances—Graphic Organizer
- Guidelines for Structuring an Essay
- Outline for an Expository Essay
- Student's Checklist
- Works Cited (MLA)

Checks & Balances—Graphic Organizer

Describe a current or historical event:

Describe the actions of at least two different branches of government:

Legislative:

Executive:

Judicial:

Checks on branches (or possible checks):

Example #1:

Example #2:

Position statement (was a branch prevented from exercising too much power?):

Implications (required to be scored as a level 4)—Impact on the rights of citizens:

Guidelines for Structuring an Essay

Introduction

Contains the thesis statement

Background (1–3 paragraphs)

- Provide background on the issue by explaining the following:
 - What the issue is
 - When it occurred
 - Why it occurred
 - Who is (which branches are) involved in the issue
- Provide an accurate explanation of the actions of at least two branches of the government during the event.

Supporting Evidence (1–2 paragraphs)

- Restate the claim regarding whether or not a branch was prevented from exercising too much power.
- Present evidence in an accurate explanation of the actions (or possible actions) of one branch of government during the event.
- Present evidence in an accurate explanation of the actions (or possible actions) of a second branch of government during the event.

Implications (1 paragraph)—*required for a score of 4*

Provide the implications for the functioning of government because of this event; include implications for:

- Related events that occurred after the actions taken by the branches.
- The rights of citizens.

Summary and Conclusion (1 paragraph)

Sum up claims and supporting evidence

Outline for an Expository Essay

Topic:

Thesis (includes your claim and supporting evidence):

Background:

Check (possible check) #1:

Check (possible check) #2:

Implication for government/citizens:

Conclusion:

Student's Checklist

- I provided background on the event by explaining what the event is and the branches of government involved.
- I stated a claim regarding the balance of power in which I accurately considered the actions of the branches of government.
- I provided background on the actions of at least two branches of government.
- I provided reason(s) for my claim, supported by evidence.
- My evidence includes an accurate explanation of how a branch of government checked (or could have checked) another branch during the event.
- My evidence includes an accurate explanation of one additional check (or possible check) of one branch of government by another branch of government during the event.
- I referred explicitly within the paper or presentation to three credible sources that provide relevant information.
- I cited sources within the paper or presentation and provided the publication details of each source in a bibliography or list of works cited.
- I did not plagiarize.

Works Cited (MLA)

Source #1

_____, _____ " _____ "

Author (Last name, First name) Title of Article (web sources, magazines, reference books)

_____ . _____

Title of Source (Italicized – Underline only if written by hand) Date

_____ . _____ . _____

Page Number(s) Type of Source Date Accessed (website only)

Source #2

_____, _____ " _____ "

Author (Last name, First name) Title of Article (web sources, magazines, reference books)

_____ . _____

Title of Source (Italicized – Underline only if written by hand) Date

_____ . _____ . _____

Page Number(s) Type of Source Date Accessed (website only)

Source #3

_____, _____ " _____ "

Author (Last name, First name) Title of Article (web sources, magazines, reference books)

_____ . _____

Title of Source (Italicized – Underline only if written by hand) Date

_____ . _____ . _____

Page Number(s) Type of Source Date Accessed (website only)

Supporting Materials and Resources for Teachers

Preparation for Administering the Assessment

Tools & Materials

Teachers will need the following materials and resources to administer this assessment:

- copies of the task (one for each student)
- copies of the rubric, handouts, worksheets, and glossary (one set for each student)

Guidelines

You can approach this assessment in any number of ways; however, the assessment is well suited to be a culminating activity of classroom instruction in civics.

While the essay format is often used for this assessment, it is not required. Students may make projects or PowerPoint presentations. Please note, however, that the final product must demonstrate that the student is able to complete the project individually; therefore, a group project is not an appropriate use of this assessment.

You should expose the students to primary source documents prior to administering this assessment.

You should also introduce students to a number of analytical methods before engaging them in the assessment; these include, but are not limited to:

- How to evaluate reliable and unreliable sources.
- How to formulate a claim.
- How to cite sources properly within a paper or presentation and in a bibliography, including instruction in APA, MLA, or Chicago citation methods.

Recommendations for Time Management

Time requirements for this assessment will vary widely based on your students' prior knowledge, chosen topics, and access to technology. If your students are completing the assessment as a culminating activity, expect to spend several days on research, collection of evidence, and outlining prior to the writing process. Writing and completion of projects can take from one day to a week depending on the prescribed format and pacing of your students.

Additional Resources

OSPI's Office of Native Education has created *Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State*. This curriculum includes a unit on the Marshall Trilogy, a series of court cases challenging the legality of removing the Cherokee and other tribes from their ancestral lands and moving them to the Oklahoma territory. This unit includes a culminating activity that incorporates the OSPI-Developed Checks & Balances Assessment. The unit can be found at <http://www.indian-ed.org/curriculum/>

Glossary

act: a formal decision, law, or the like, by a legislature, ruler, court, or other authority; decree or edict; statute; judgment, resolve, or award.

amendment: an alteration of or addition to a motion, bill, constitution, etc.

branches of government: the division of government into executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In the case of the federal government, the three branches were established by the Constitution.

checks and balances: limits imposed on all branches of a government by vesting in each branch the right to amend or void those acts of another that fall within its purview.

constitutional powers: actions authorized by or subject to a constitution.

executive branch: the branch of government charged with the execution and enforcement of laws and policies and the administration of public affairs.

implication: a possible future effect or result; having an impact or connection to future events or actions.

judicial branch: the branch of government charged with the interpretation of laws and the administration of justice.

judicial review: the power of a court to adjudicate the constitutionality of the laws of a government or the acts of a government official.

legislative branch: the branch of government having the power to make laws.

unconstitutional: unauthorized by or inconsistent with the Constitution.

veto power: the power or right vested in one branch of a government to cancel or postpone the decisions, enactments, etc., of another branch, especially the right of a president, governor, or chief executive to reject bills passed by the legislature.

Source: all definitions derived from [Dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) (www.dictionary.com) and [Merriam-Webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com) (www.merriam-webster.com).

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- Washington State Social Studies Learning Standards: the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs).
- OSPI-developed classroom-based assessments.
- Intentional connections with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies.

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