

***“Unpacking” the Rhode Island
Civics & Government
and Historical Perspectives
Grade Span Expectations (GSEs)***

December 2008

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

“Unpacking” the GSEs



What are the GSEs, why do we have them, and how do we implement them?



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History of the GSEs

- ❖ These GSEs are grade span expectations, or standards, for K-12 education in civics, history, and social studies content and skills. Other GSEs focus on reading, writing, mathematics, and science.
- ❖ The GSEs are organized into spans (K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-12, Extended Learning) in order to capture the “big ideas” of civics and history that can be taught and assessed without narrowing the curriculum locally
- ❖ A 2005 Rhode Island public law (16-22-2) mandated the creation and implementation of these civics GSEs
- ❖ A group of educators developed the draft Civics GSEs in Summer 2006
- ❖ The Board of Regents approved the final version of the Civics GSEs in December 2008



Rhode Island Public Law 16-22-2

§ 16-22-2 Civics education. – The general assembly recognizes the importance of a citizenry well educated in the principles of democracy as enunciated in the constitutions of the state of Rhode Island and the United States. The general assembly directs the board of regents for elementary and secondary education to develop and adopt a set of grade level expectations K-12 in civics education no later than August 31, 2007. These standards shall include, but not be limited to, the history of the state of Rhode Island, representative government, the rights and duties of actively engaged citizenship, and the principals of democracy. *These civic education standards shall be used in the public schools of this state beginning in kindergarten and continuing through to and including grade 12.* [emphasis added] No private school or private instruction shall be approved for the purposes of chapter 19 of this title unless the course of study shall make provision for instruction substantially equivalent to that required by this chapter for public schools.



Timeline of Development

- ❖ 2005: Law enacted requiring the development of K-12 GSEs for civics, government, and Rhode Island history by August 31, 2007 for implementation statewide
- ❖ 2006: Development committee formed to create the Civics GSEs
- ❖ 2007: Draft GSEs completed and released for higher education and district review
- ❖ 2008: Appendices developed
- ❖ 2008: December - final version of GSEs approved
- ❖ 2008-2009: District roll-out and implementation



What do the GSEs cover?

- ❖ Civics & Government:
 - ❖ government
 - ❖ authority/power
 - ❖ U.S. government
 - ❖ democratic values and principles
 - ❖ citizens' rights and responsibilities
 - ❖ political systems and political processes
 - ❖ civil society
 - ❖ interconnected world community
- ❖ Historical Thinking:
 - ❖ gathering information
 - ❖ interpretation of history
 - ❖ connecting the past with the present
 - ❖ chronicle events and conditions
 - ❖ change over time
 - ❖ how the past frames the present
 - ❖ personal connections in an historical context
- ❖ Geography and economics in the context of civics and historical thinking
- ❖ Rhode Island history



What do the GSEs cover?

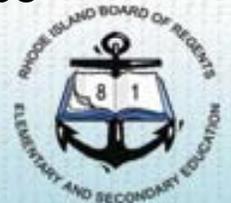
- ❖ Rhode Island history is incorporated throughout the GSEs within the indicators and as examples wherever possible – not as a separate strand
- ❖ The grade span specific documents contain a column labeled ‘potential topics/resources’ that references specific incidences in Rhode Island history and other topics to aid teachers in linking topics with the GSEs
- ❖ The Civics GSEs are not meant to replace curriculum, merely to serve as a framework that captures the “big ideas” of civics and history
- ❖ Local curriculum should use national education standards for the content areas that are not supported by the Civics GSEs: geography, economics, topics in history (world, U.S., etc.)
- ❖ If in the future there is a need for additional strands containing those content areas, the format, content, and structure of these GSEs allows for those strands to be added if their development as a separate document is not possible

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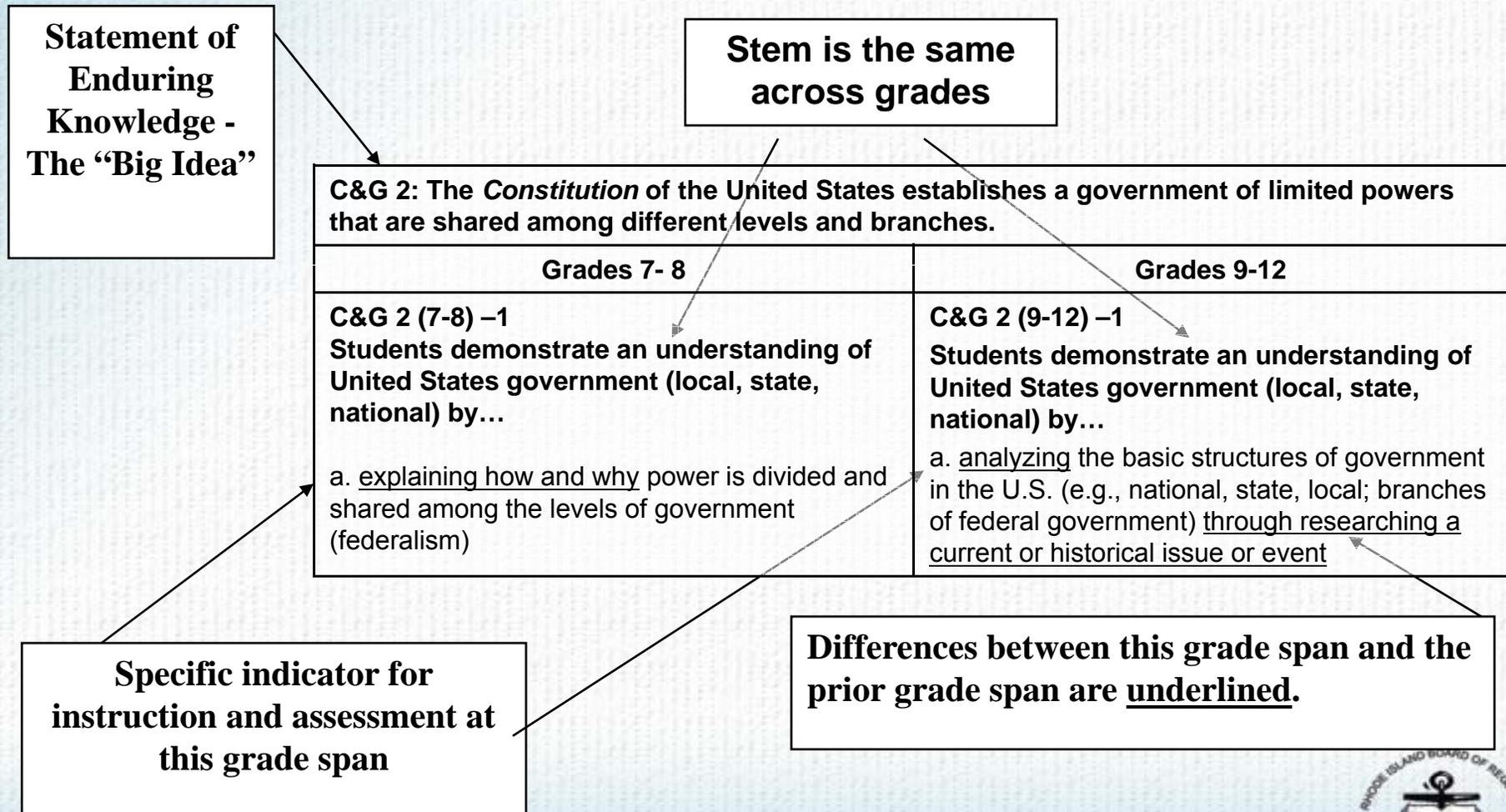
How to Read the GSEs: Structure

- ❖ **An overarching Statement of Enduring Knowledge identifies the “big ideas” of the discipline.** Enduring Knowledge is defined as understandings that have enduring value beyond a single lesson, unit of study, or grade level; are at the heart of the discipline (“doing” the subject); uncover abstract, complex, or often misunderstood ideas; and can be used to frame *essential questions for learning* (e.g., What are the purposes and functions of government? How does one become a citizen?).
- ❖ **A statement in bold, called the “stem,”** is the first part of each GSE. Each “stem” is the same across the grades for a given GSE, and is meant to communicate the main curriculum and instructional focus across the grades for the related big idea.
- ❖ **The non-bold text** within a GSE indicates how the GSE is specified at a given grade span.
- ❖ **Differences between adjacent grades** are underlined.
(Note: Sometimes nothing is underlined within a GSE. In these situations, differences in adjacent grades assume increasing complexity or perhaps broadening the scope of the content or skills.)



How to Read the GSEs: Structure

Sample Rhode Island GSE for Civics & Government



How to Read the GSEs: Notation

Each RI GSE is coded for the content area, the grade span, the GSE “stem” number, and the specific indicator for that GSE stem.

Example:

“C&G 2 – (9-12) -1.a” means

- C&G 2 (Civics & Government, 2nd Statement of Enduring Knowledge)
- 9-12 (grade span 9-12/Proficiency)
- 1 (1st GSE “stem”)
- a (the first specific indicator for the 1st GSE stem under C&G 2)

How to Read the GSEs: Appendices

- ❖ Glossary:
 - ❖ Definitions of terms found in the grade span expectations
 - ❖ Definitions of either widely-used or hard-to-define terms
 - ❖ Mostly for parental and student benefit to give a general idea of what each term means

- ❖ *Suggested Resources:*
 - ❖ List of civics, government, and history (global and Rhode Island) online resources that can be accessed free of charge
 - ❖ Resources in the global section are primarily government websites that give free information, access to primary documents, etc.
 - ❖ Resources in the Rhode Island section are Rhode Island historical places, organizations, or societies that provide information free of charge online, and that also have additional information “in person”



Where to use the GSEs:

These GSEs honor local opportunities to learn while still maintaining foundational content knowledge/skills across school districts

❖ Curriculum:

- ❖ Revise the curriculum so that all students have multiple learning opportunities to achieve the civics GSEs
- ❖ The Civics GSEs provide flexibility in developing curriculum and educational programs

❖ Course of study/program, class/course:

- ❖ Identify areas of unnecessary duplication/repetition and areas where there are gaps in the social studies, civics, and history programs of study
- ❖ Provide common framework for classes/courses

❖ Units and lessons:

- ❖ Basic proficiency in content knowledge gained in a unit or the goal of a unit can be measured
- ❖ Individual lessons are focused on a certain goal; content may vary but goal remains the same

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How to implement?

- ❖ Create new lesson plans that focus on a particular GSE as a learning outcome
- ❖ Align existing lessons and units to applicable GSEs
- ❖ Re-develop or update the curriculum or program of study (e.g., gap analysis) to cover all of the GSEs
- ❖ Use various suggested resource materials that have concordances to the GSEs
- ❖ Regular professional development provides opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment as informed by the Civics GSEs

What subjects can use these GSEs?

- Social Studies, History, Civics
- English / Language Arts
- Science
- Mathematics

How?

Through the integration of multiple disciplines within service learning and community-based projects, as well as through lessons containing real life applications (e.g., math: a unit on statistics that focuses on voting trends in the local community)

- ❖ Many concepts in the Civics GSEs – such as civic engagement, civic rights and responsibilities, the impact of our actions on the world around us and how we are all connected, historical/critical thinking skills – can be applied to subjects other than social studies or history through projects, lessons, labs, or discussion.
- ❖ The Civics GSEs can also be applied in math – through real-world problem solving using mathematical scenarios (e.g., economics problems, price of a certain product, election statistics, etc.)



Where can I find resources?

- ❖ The RI Statewide Curriculum Web site has recently been updated and now includes more quality social studies and history resources:
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/curriculum/default.aspx>
- ❖ The Office of Instruction has recently updated its Civics web site to include resources on the Civics GSEs:
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/civics.aspx>



Questions?

Need more information?

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/civics.aspx>

Looking for the GSEs?

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/gle.aspx#civics>

Looking for quality educational resources?

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/curriculum/default.aspx>

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