

Maryland High School American Government Essential Elements

The purpose of the Essential Elements is to build a bridge between the general education social studies framework and academic expectations appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These standards guide the development of Maryland's alternate assessment and ensure that all students access the same essential American government content in ways that reflect their individual learning needs. Each assessed unit in the [Maryland High School American Government Framework](#) is represented by one Essential Element that highlights the unit's core content topics and enduring understandings.

High School American Government Units	Essential Element
Structure and Origins of Government	Students will use evidence from sources (e.g., Bill of Rights, United States Constitution*) to identify how the principles of democracy are applied to protect basic rights and principles in the United States of America. For example: • representative democracy (people vote for their leaders) • individual rights (as found in the Bill of Rights) • separation of powers (three branches of government) • consent of the governed • majority rule *Sources can include excerpts or adapted versions of source documents.
The Legislative Branch	Students will compare the purposes and powers (to make laws) of democratically elected bicameral legislatures at the national and state levels.
The Executive Branch	Students will compare the purposes (to enforce laws) and powers (e.g., executive orders and government agencies) of executive branch leaders at state (governor) and national levels (president) and describe how they are elected.

High School American Government Units	Essential Element
The Judicial Branch	Students will compare the purposes (to interpret laws) and powers of state and national courts to decide cases (civil, criminal, and/or supreme).
Economic Policy	Students will present an argument using evidence to explain how the legislative and executive branches control money supply and spending (e.g., print money, collect taxes, set spending budgets) to promote a healthy economy.
Domestic Policy	Students will analyze evidence from sources to explain how domestic policies used by the United States government promote the common good (e.g., policies to support public health, environment, infrastructure, voting, civil rights, immigration).
Foreign Policy	Students will explain how policies used by the United States government to interact with other nations involve the military, money (foreign aid), and diplomacy (alliances) to keep the United States of America safe and prosperous and to protect human rights around the world.

American Government Unit: Structure and Origins of Government

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form a democratic system that serves the purposes of government and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Unit Question:

How do the principles and structures of the United States government assist and/or impede meeting the purposes of government while protecting the rights and authority of citizens?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 1.0: Civics Standard 2.0: Peoples of the Nations and World Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence (identify credible, relevant information contained in sources)	Target: Students will use evidence from sources (e.g., Bill of Rights, United States Constitution*) to identify how the principles of democracy are applied to protect basic rights and principles in the United States of America. For example: • representative democracy (people vote for their leaders) • individual rights (as found in the Bill of Rights) • separation of powers (three branches of government) • consent of the governed • majority rule *Sources can include excerpts or adapted versions of source documents.
	Precursor: Students will identify the principles of United States democracy that protect the basic rights of individuals. For example: • individual rights (as found in the Bill of Rights) • separation of powers (three branches of government) • representative democracy (people vote for their leaders)
	Initial: Students will identify a rule that protects people's rights.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- ELA EE.RI.9-10.2: Determine the central idea of a text and select details to support it.
- ELA EE.RI.9-10.9: Make connections between texts with related themes and concepts.
- ELA EE. W.11-12.9: Cite evidence from literary or informational texts.
- ELA EE.L.11-12.6: Use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases across contexts.
- SCI SEP 8: Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information.

Teacher Resources

- [ConSource US Constitution \(Original text, adapted text, primary source connections\): Center for Civic Education](#)
- [Principles and Virtues: Bill of Rights Institute](#)

Video Resources

- [Foundations of the Constitution: iCivics](#)
- [Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances: Crash Course \(PBS\)](#)

American Government Unit: The Legislative Branch

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form a legislative branch that serves the purposes established in the Constitution and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Unit Question:

How do the foundational principles and structures of government assist or impede the functioning of government in the legislative branch?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 1.0: Civics Standard 3.0: Geography Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools (civics, geography)	Target: Students will compare the purposes and powers (to make laws) of democratically elected bicameral legislatures at the national and state levels.
	Precursor: Students will explain how national and state laws help protect citizens.
	Initial: Students will identify familiar rules and laws and who makes them.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- ELA EE.RI.9-10.3: Determine logical connections between individuals, ideas, or events in a text.
- ELA EE.RI.11-12.1: Analyze a text to determine its meaning and cite textual evidence to support explicit and implicit understanding.
- ELA EE. RI.11-12.7: Analyze information presented in different media on related topics to answer questions or solve problems.

Teacher Resources

- [The US Legislative Process: US House of Representatives](#)
- [Maryland Legislative Process: Department of Legislative Services](#)
- [Kids in the House: Clerk of the US House of Representatives](#)
- [General Assembly Virtual Guided Tours: Department of Legislative Services](#)
- [Maryland Redistricting Commission: Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission](#)

Video Resources

- [What is the Legislative Branch?: History Channel](#)
- [The Legislative Process: US Congress Gov](#)
- [Gerrymandering: Is Geometry silencing your vote?: PBS Learning Media](#)

American Government Unit: The Executive Branch

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form an executive branch that serves the purposes established in the Constitution and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Unit Question:

How do the foundational principles and structures of government assist or impede the functioning of government in the executive branch?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 1.0: Civics Standard 4.0: Economics Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools (civics, economics)	Target: Students will compare the purposes (to enforce laws) and powers (e.g., executive orders and government agencies) of executive branch leaders at state (governor) and national levels (president) and describe how they are elected.
	Precursor: Students will describe how the president and governor are elected and the powers they have.
	Initial: Students can identify the president and the governor and understand that they are voted into office by the people.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- ELA EE.RI.9-10.3: Determine logical connections between individuals, ideas, or events in a text.
- ELA EE.RI.11-12.1: Analyze a text to determine its meaning and cite textual evidence to support explicit and implicit understanding.
- ELA EE. RI.11-12.7: Analyze information presented in different media on related topics to answer questions or solve problems.

Teacher Resources

- [MD Executive Branch: Maryland Manual Online](#)
- [The Executive Branch: The White House](#)
- [What is the Electoral College?: National Archives](#)

Video Resources

- [Does your vote count? Electoral College Explained: TED Talk](#)
- [Power of the President: What does the President of the U.S. Really Do?](#)

American Government Unit: The Judicial Branch

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form a judicial branch that serves the purposes established in the Constitution and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Unit Question:

How do the foundational principles and structures of government assist or impede the functioning of government in the judicial branch?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 1.0: Civics Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools (civics)	Target: Students will compare the purposes (to interpret laws) and powers of state and national courts to decide cases (civil, criminal, and/or supreme).
	Precursor: Students will describe how courts make decisions based on laws.
	Initial: Students will identify how courts determine if someone broke the law.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- ELA EE.RI.9-10.3: Determine logical connections between individuals, ideas, or events in a text.
- ELA EE.RI.11-12.1: Analyze a text to determine its meaning and cite textual evidence to support explicit and implicit understanding.
- ELA EE.RI.11-12.7: Analyze information presented in different media on related topics to answer questions or solve problems.

Teacher Resources

- [How Courts Work: American Bar Association](#)
- [Materials for Maryland Teachers: Street Law](#)

Video Resources

- [What is the Law?: Maryland Courts](#)
- [What is the Judicial Branch of the US Government?: History](#)
- [How do US Supreme Court justices get appointed?: TED talk](#)

American Government Unit: Economic Policy

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

United States economic policy is continually adapting to meet competing socioeconomic goals.

Unit Question:

How does the United States balance competing socioeconomic goals?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 4.0: Economics Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #4: Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (communicating and presenting claims)	Target: Students will present an argument using evidence to explain how the legislative and executive branches control money supply and spending (e.g., print money, collect taxes, set spending budgets) to promote a healthy economy.
	Precursor: Students will select evidence to show that the United States government can control money supply and identify what the money is spent on.
	Initial: Students will identify ways that people collect and spend money.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- Math HS EE.S-ID1-3: Interpret general trends on a graph or chart.
- Math HS EE.S-IC.1-2: Determine the likelihood of an event occurring when the outcomes are equally likely to occur.
- ELA EE.SL9-10.4: Present an argument on a topic with logically organized claims, reasons, and evidence.
- ELA EE.11-12.7: Analyze information presented in different media on related topics to answer questions or solve problems.
- SCI SEP 5: Using mathematics and computational thinking.
- ELA EE.SL.11-12.1: Engage in collaborative discussions.

Teacher Resources

- [Where does our money go?: Foundation for Teaching Economics](#)
- [Trade-offs with broad social goals: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#)
- [Economic Growth and Scarcity: Foundation for Teaching Economics](#)

Video Resources

- [Where do our federal tax dollars go?: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)
- [Economic Lowdown classroom resources: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#)
- [Policymaking and the Three Branches of Government: CSPAN Classroom](#)

American Government Unit: Domestic Policy

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

In the United States, the government balances competing interests to develop domestic policy that promotes the common good.

Unit Question:

How does the government balance competing interpretations of the common good in order to implement public policy?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 1.0: Civics Standard 3.0: Geography Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence (construct arguments with evidence from multiple sources)	Target: Students will analyze evidence in sources to explain how domestic policies used by the United States government promote the common good (e.g., policies to support public health, environment, infrastructure, voting, civil rights, and immigration).
	Precursor: Students will describe methods (e.g., creating laws and rules, providing funding) that the United States government can use to help people nationally and regionally.
	Initial: Students will identify ways that individuals benefit from programs that solve problems for many people (e.g., clean air).

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- ELA EE.RI.9-10.9: Make connections between texts with related themes and concepts.
- ELA EE.SL.9-10.4: Present an argument on a topic with logically organized claims, reasons, and evidence.
- ELA EE.11-12.7: Analyze information presented in different media on related topics to answer questions or solve problems.
- ELA EE.SL.11-12.1: Engage in collaborative discussions.

Teacher Resources

- [We the People: Project Citizen: Center for Civic Education](#)
- [C-SPAN Classroom Deliberations](#)
- [Education Policy: Should There Be Increased School Choice?](#)
- [Technology Policy: Is AI an Opportunity or a Threat?](#)
- [Technology Policy: Should social media companies be responsible for removing content on their platforms?](#)
- [KidPost \(News stories for kid audience from Washington Post\)](#)
- [C3 Teacher Inquires \(some listed below\)](#)
- [Policing Policy: What should Governments and Communities do about Mass Incarceration in the US?](#)
- [Voting Rights Policy: Should the right to vote be protected in the Constitution?](#)

American Government Unit: Foreign Policy

UNIT ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

In the United States, foreign policy is continually adapting to meet its competing foreign policy goals.

Unit Question:

How does the United States balance competing foreign policy goals?

MD State Standards	Essential Element
Standard 2.0: Peoples of the Nations and World Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes #1: Developing Questions and Planning Resources (determining helpful resources)	Target: Students will explain how policies used by the United States government to interact with other nations involve the military, money (foreign aid), and diplomacy (alliances) to keep the United States of America safe and prosperous and to protect human rights around the world.
	Precursor: Students will identify methods (e.g., the military, diplomacy, and money) the United States uses to interact with friendly and hostile nations.
	Initial: Students will differentiate between the friends (i.e., allies) and enemies (i.e., opponents) the United States has in the world.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTION

Connection to other [DLM Essential Elements](#)

- ELA EE.RI.9-10.9: Make connections between texts with related themes and concepts.
- ELA EE.SL.9-10.4: Present an argument on a topic with logically organized claims, reasons, and evidence.
- ELA EE.11-12.7: Analyze information presented in different media on related topics to answer questions or solve problems.
- ELA EE.SL.11-12.1: Engage in collaborative discussions.

Teacher Resources

- [Tools of Foreign Policy](#)
- [United Nations \(UN\)](#)
- [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#)
- [World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#)
- <https://www.icrc.org/en/who-we-are/mandate>

Teacher Resources

- [World 101: Tools of Foreign Policy](#)
- [What is Diplomacy and How Does it Work?: National Museum of American Diplomacy](#)