The Constitution of New Jersey and State and County Government

Research Simulation Task • Grades 6 through 12 • Five Days

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

Essential Question

How can New Jersey residents use constitutional rights and knowledge of state and county government to improve their communities?

Learning Goals

Explain constitutional rights and checks on power. Distinguish state, county, and municipal responsibilities. Evaluate evidence and propose a realistic civic action.

NJSLS Social Studies

6.3.8.CivicsPI.1 • Evaluate the purposes government should serve.
6.3.8.CivicsPI.3 • Examine an issue through multiple perspectives and share findings to build support. Grade 6 through 8 instructional anchor; grades 9 through 12 extend through comparative research and policy evaluation.

NJSLS English Language Arts

RI.CR.6.1 • Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections.
W.AW.6.1 • Develop arguments with reasons and evidence. Grade 6 anchors with increasing text complexity and independent research in later grades.

Common Core Literacy Connections

RH.6 through 8.1, RH.9 through 10.1, RH.11 through 12.1 • Cite historical evidence.
WHST.6 through 8.1, WHST.9 through 10.1, WHST.11 through 12.1 • Write evidence based arguments. Apply the standard for the enrolled grade band.

Amistad Alignment

Investigate African American voting rights, exclusion, and civic agency in New Jersey. Compare constitutional promises with access to political power.

Day 1 ● Constitutional Rights and Public Power

Do Now

Why should government power have limits?

Source A ● A Constitution as a Civic Tool

A constitution establishes a government and sets limits on its authority. New Jersey adopted constitutions in 1776, 1844, and 1947. The 1947 Constitution, with later amendments, is the state’s current governing charter. It works within the federal constitutional system. A state law cannot override the United States Constitution.

Article I protects rights. Paragraph 2 locates political power in the people. Paragraph 5 prohibits specified forms of discrimination and segregation in public schools. Paragraph 18 protects peaceful assembly and petition. These protections give residents standards for judging public decisions, including decisions affecting young people.

A constitutional guarantee is a legal commitment, but people may still need to organize, document unequal treatment, and seek enforcement. A responsible civic argument identifies the right involved, explains the harm, and asks a body with authority to act. The Constitution is more than a symbol when residents connect its principles to evidence.

Source note • Author prepared synthesis of the New Jersey Constitution, Article I, paragraphs 2, 5, and 18, and State Archives constitutional history. This is a paraphrase, not a verbatim excerpt.

Quick Write • How can a constitutional protection help a community challenge unequal treatment? Use Source A.