

Assessment Design Tool: Designing Evidence-Centered Assessment Items

Tra'Neisha LaRoche
Social Studies Subject Matter Expert

Assessment should be designed after identifying the historical thinking, selecting an instructional anchor, and clarifying the intended student learning. This assessment design tool helps South Carolina U.S. History teachers design, evaluate, or adapt evidence-centered assessment items that align with the South Carolina U.S. History and the Constitution standards. Using a structured planning process, educators identify the historical thinking required by an indicator, determine the intended Depth of Knowledge (DOK), apply the Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), and design assessment items that reflect the rigor and reasoning expected on the EOCEP while supporting high-quality classroom instruction. Use this planning process to ensure that every assessment item intentionally measures the historical thinking, content, and level of reasoning required by the standard.

Planning Process:

1. Select a U.S. History Indicator.

Select one indicator from the South Carolina U.S. History and the Constitution standards. Use the South Carolina U.S. History Alignment Guide to identify:

- the embedded Historical Thinking Skill
- the intended DOK
- the essential content students should understand
- a high-leverage instructional anchor that organizes the historical thinking

2. Design, Select, or Adapt Three Evidence-Centered Assessment Items

Create original assessment items, adapt existing assessment items, or select high-quality assessment items from a trusted source. Revise them as needed to ensure alignment with the intended historical thinking, DOK, and PLDs.

- A mix of item types (SR, MS, EBSR, TECR)
- At least one technology-enhanced constructed response (TECR) or evidence-based selected response (EBSR) item

Assessment Design Tool:

Designing Evidence-Centered Assessment Items

3. Align Each Assessment Item

For each assessment item, document the following alignment information:

- USHC Indicator
- Historical Thinking Skill (e.g., CX, CE, P)
- DOK Level
- Item Type
- Targeted PLD Level (Minimally Meets, Meets, Exceeds)
- Content Focus (specific concept, historical development, or evidence assessed)
- Rationale for Alignment (1–2 sentences explaining how the item measures the intended historical thinking, reflects the required DOK, and provides evidence of student understanding.)

4. Use the Assessment Alignment Checklist

Review each assessment item using the Assessment Alignment Checklist. Revise items as needed to strengthen alignment among the standard, historical thinking, DOK, PLDs, and assessment evidence.

Make revisions as needed and note any changes you made to strengthen alignment.

Planning Reminder

Effective assessment begins with the historical thinking required by the standard and should reflect the same instructional anchor that guided learning. Use the Assessment Alignment Checklist to ensure every assessment item intentionally aligns historical thinking, content, DOK, PLDs, and assessment evidence.

Reflect: Designing Evidence-Centered Assessments

After completing this assessment design tool, reflect individually or with a professional learning community on how your assessment design decisions support coherent, evidence-centered instruction.

- Which assessment item best demonstrates the intended historical thinking, and why?
- How did the DOK and the PLDs shape your assessment design?
- What revisions would strengthen alignment among the standard, instruction, and assessment?