

Innovation Lab Network Performance Assessment Project
Quality Criteria for Performance Assessments
The Case for Revolution

Quality Criteria	Yes	Yes, with Slight Modifications	No	Rationale/Suggestions
1. Focus on Deeper Learning				
a. Does the task require the demonstration and/or application of complex skills (e.g., Critical Abilities, DOK Levels 3 and 4, 21 st century skills, Key Cognitive Strategies)?*	✓			This task asks students to read closely a single document, The Declaration of Independence, and analyze its structure and meaning. Students must also read and apply background contextual information in an effort to understand the reasoning in the document and explain it carefully. The task involves a high degree of collaboration in pairs and small groups, and the communication and presentation of ideas orally as well as in written form. The task requires the demonstration of complex skills such as DOK level 3.
b. Can students' responses to this task (what students are asked to produce) provide evidence of important college/career readiness skills and Critical Abilities (e.g., collaboration, research skills, evidence-based communication)?*	✓			Students are asked to produce a coherent and well-structured essay explaining the key reasons that moved the colonists to declare their independence in 1776. This essay will provide evidence of writing skills at a high level of complexity (stating a claim, understanding complicated vocabulary in context, evaluating reasoning based on evidence supplied by the text, using context and content knowledge and demonstrating an ability to organize a well-constructed essay.)
c. Does the task address key concepts and skills in the discipline that are transferable to other contexts?*	✓			The task focuses on perhaps the most important document in U.S. history, the Declaration of Independence. Whereas most history courses focus almost entirely on the first two paragraphs of the Declaration, this task gives greatest attention to a full comprehension of its list of grievances and the historical context that helps explain them. The Declaration and the other materials and mini-tasks provided are relevant to many aspects of U.S. history, hence the disciplinary concepts addressed by this task are transferable to many other content areas or topics related to U.S. history and government. The task also guides students in a step-by-step process in close reading, document analysis, understanding terminology in context, refining a clear controlling idea for an explanatory essay, and developing explanations for it based on the evidence. This task therefore entails the use of reading and writing skills that are transferable to many other contexts.
2. Alignment to Standards				
a. Does the task measure key skills and major	✓			The task requires the use of several key skills all of which are

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claims emphasized by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and/or NGSS? *				addressed by the Common Core standards listed in the task instructions - such as evaluating the validity of reasoning in an argument, assessing the evidence for a claim, reading closely to understand words and phrases in context, and writing and revising a carefully constructed essay in response to the task prompt.
b. Can students' responses to this task (what students are asked to produce) be scored using CCSS/NGSS aligned rubrics? *	✓			Students are asked to produce a well-reasoned essay that closely analyzes one key primary source and relates it to corroborating information from other secondary sources. These writing skills correspond to those stated in several Common Core standards.
c. Are the scoring criteria--rubrics, point scoring systems, checklists (if provided)--aligned to key expectations of the CCSS/NGSS?	✓			The LDC Student Work Rubric - Informational or Explanatory provided is aligned with the CCSS standards relevant to this task.
d. Is the rigor of the task appropriately matched to the grade-level standards being assessed?	✓			This task is a challenging one for its grade 6-8 target group. The list of grievances in the Declaration of Independence are not easy to understand, either in terminology or in their meaning within the context of the conflict between the colonies and Great Britain. However, the scaffolding is such that students are guided in a highly detailed and relevant way in analyzing the document, defining its difficult words and phrases, and understanding it in its historical context.
3. Student Choice and Agency				
a. Does the task allow for a variety of responses and/or solution pathways? *	✓			Students must arrive at their own understanding of the set of grievances in the Declaration and defend their interpretations in a variety of ways. They must engage in many collaborative efforts in which they refine and present their ideas and debate conflicting points of view. They must then formulate their essay's own controlling idea in response to the prompt and write their essay according to instructions but with many opportunities to make their own choices and stress their own interpretations.
b. Does the task offer opportunities for student ownership and student choice (e.g., selecting a research question or topic; selecting sources; etc.)?			✓	The opportunities for student ownership are limited. Students must respond to the task prompt by dealing with a single set of sources provided for them ahead of time. The instructions carefully guide students in assessing these sources and using them to address the prompt. Students make interpretive choices along the way, but do so according to a single set procedure for completing the task.
c. Does the task require student-initiated				Students are given firm guidelines on how to analyze the sources, with

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planning and management of information/data and ideas (e.g., determining strategies for solving a problem; designing an investigation; deciding how to present findings; etc.)?			✓	many carefully structured mini-tasks for note-taking, discussion of specifics from the Declaration, debating conflicting views on those details, etc. A single outline is described telling students how to construct their essays. Students do have to organize and maintain the information and the notes they generate and use in writing and revising their final essay. But this involves minimal planning and management.
4. Relevance and Authenticity				
a. Is task content represented in a way that is appropriately authentic (i.e., not overly hypothetical), relevant (i.e., relatable), and/or meaningful to students and the discipline (e.g., topic connects to students' lives, task simulates authentic purpose and audience)? *	✓			The task content is based on the text of the Declaration of Independence. Some secondary source material is provided to support the analysis of this document, which is certainly meaningful to the discipline of history. The Declaration is obviously relevant to many matters that are also meaningful to students and that connect with their lives in many ways.
b. Is the task related to real world problems, contexts, and/or purposes?	✓			In fact, many real world social and political issues in American society involve the Declaration of Independence in one way or another. An understanding of the Declaration is important to developing a better grasp of what those issues are about.
5. Suitable for Diverse Student Populations				
a. Is the task, at its core, free of bias that might disadvantage specific student populations and free of stereotypes in language, content, and design? *	✓			
b. Does the task include, or allow for the use of, a variety of stimuli?			✓	The task is based on several written sources. All of the materials provided are written texts.
c. Does the task provide instructional scaffolds to support student learning and skill development toward successful completion of the task?	✓			The task provides very detailed and helpful instructions for each of a great many well sequenced mini-tasks all designed to help students deepen their understanding of the Declaration. Along with these mini-tasks, several very helpful charts, checklists and other kinds of scaffolding are provided.
d. Does the task include appropriate recommendations for accommodations and differentiation to provide access for diverse students?			✓	

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6. Design of Student Task				
a. Is the overall task prompt clear (e.g., clear student directions, unambiguous graphics)? *		✓		The prompt is clear and adequate as is. And as is, it correctly calls for an "explanatory" essay. One possible problem has to do with arguments about the nature and severity of the grievances the Declaration lists. At one point (page 12), the instructions ask students to debate pros and cons by taking the roles of "patriots" or "loyalists" in a debate. This argumentative aspect is not clearly a part of the prompt, which primarily asks students to analyze "how they [the grievances listed] show 'a long train of abuses.'" If this argumentative aspect is vital to the task, perhaps the prompt might be reworded to make the essay task reflect that priority.
b. Is task information presented in an organized way?	✓			The instructions are highly detailed and clear.
7. Curriculum-Embedded				
a. Is the task feasible for most school/classroom environments (e.g., access to necessary resources)?	✓			
b. Does the task include opportunities for independent work as well as interaction/collaboration with peers?	✓			This task essentially asks students to write a well-researched and planned explanatory essay. This requires independent work. A good deal of collaboration in pairs and small groups is also provided for.

Task Materials	Yes	No	Comments
a. Is the task missing any referenced accompanying materials (resources, handouts, rubrics etc.)? If yes, please indicate which materials are missing.		✓	
b. Does this task contain topics/materials/texts that might be sensitive for some students? If yes, please explain.		✓	

Comments: Students are asked to do a great deal of careful analysis of the text of the Declaration of Independence. Given the importance of the document in American history and government courses, and considering the lack of attention often devoted to the grievances section of the Declaration, this task is worthy of the time devoted to it. The mini-tasks are very well sequenced and they pose many challenging issues for students to contend with. Students are given several opportunities to engage in collaborative activities preparatory to and accompanying the writing of their essays.