

# THE ABCs OF THE CBAs

*Education Paper No. 5*



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## Introduction

This paper provides some background on the Classroom Based Assessments (or CBAs) program being implemented in Washington State, and illustrates how heritage organizations and specialists can develop educational resources that support students and schools in addressing the CBAs. Basic information about CBAs can be accessed on-line at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SocialStudies/CBAs/default.aspx>.

### *WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE CBAs?*

*CBAs are Classroom-Based Assessments, a method of assessing student knowledge and progress in Social Studies, the Arts, and PE/Health as developed by the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Student progress is measured using project-based tasks versus a regular standardized test.*

### *WHY WERE CBAs DEVELOPED?*

- In 1993, Washington State joined a nationwide movement called *Educational Reform*—the idea that *schools needed common educational standards for learning and assessment*.
- A group called the *Commission on Student Learning* was established to develop a set of broad learning standards for each basic subject called the *Essential Academic Learning Requirements* (EALRs).
- In order to be accountable that students have had the opportunity to meet EALRs, a series of standardized tests called the *Washington Assessment of Student Learning* (WASLs) were developed to test student progress.
- The WASLs were only designed to measure progress in 4 major areas: *English, Writing, Math, and Science*. These tests are made up of: 1) selected response (multiple choice); 2) short constructed response; and 3) extended constructed response. The WASL is given to students in the 4th, 7th, and 10th grades. Now, as required by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*, students take it in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades as well. In the recent past, the WASL gained a high degree of notoriety when it was deemed necessary to pass the *math, reading, and writing parts of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade WASL in order to graduate from high school*. That test is taken in the spring of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Since these subjects (English, Writing, Math, and Science) were the ones that were being measured on that test, a “high-stakes” accountability to do well on the WASLs has tended to minimize attention to classroom instruction in Social Studies, Arts, and PE/Health.
- House Bill 1209 was a key state law which adopted the CBAs as a means of assessing progress in Social Studies, Art, and PE/Health.

- In 2004, a bill (Third Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2195) was passed to amend HB1209 and requires an assessment strategy for those classes (Social Studies, the Arts, PE/Health) to be in place in the schools by 2008-2009. It is hoped that this legislation will bring Social Studies, the Arts, and PE/Health back to mainstream educational importance.

#### CBAs (Classroom-Based Assessments)

- Beginning in 2008-2009 school year this assessment method (CBAs) became mandatory in Washington State Public Schools.
- Are the backbone of a system that will ensure alignment among instruction, assessments, and standards for Social Studies, the Arts, and Health/PE. The CBAs allow teachers to measure student progress in meeting the EALRs using a standardized progress and scoring guide.
- Are lists of project-based tasks that have been developed to guide and encourage students in meeting the broad learning standards (EALRS – Essential Academic Learning Requirements) for Social Studies, Art, and Health/PE.
- Provide a guide for teachers to help students learn Social Studies concepts in a greater variety and number of ways, as well as in a manner that is more personalized and compatible to established student or class lesson plans.
- Are projects that encourage teachers to go into depth on a particular topic and seek to engage students in tasks that help them become informed citizens.
- Have as a goal to evaluate the students' understanding of Social Studies concepts, not specific content.
- One semester of Social Studies (or its equivalent) is required at the K-6 level and 1 semester of Social Studies (or its equivalent) is required at the 7-12 level. It can be as simple as a one day project or as extensive as a nine week or semester-long project.
- Each CBA model provides the following materials:
  - 1) Clear explanation for students as to what they will learn in the CBA
  - 2) Checklist for students to track their assignments to fulfill CBA
  - 3) Clear directions for project administration for teachers
  - 4) Rubrics for scoring
  - 5) Support materials
- Each CBA has been carefully designed so that all of the steps involve one or more of the Social Studies Skills EALRS and consists of the following steps:
  - 1) Essential Questions
  - 2) Key Concepts and Vocabulary
  - 3) Inquiry (Reading)
  - 4) Organization and Synthesis
  - 5) Group Process and Discussion
  - 6) Position (Writing)
  - 7) Presentation (Communication)
- The most common choice of most museums who have begun to align or create curriculum or projects to be used to meet CBA requirements is the “*Dig Deep*” project.

It is one that specifically requires interpretation of primary sources and secondary sources– the backbone of most museums and historical societies.

### *FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CBAs*

Visit the OSPI web-site at <http://www.k12.wa.us/>. On the home page, there is a blue bar header under the OSPI title. Click on *Assessment*. Scroll down to *Classroom-Based Assessment* and click on it. This page provides information for Social Studies, the Arts, Health and Fitness, including frequently asked questions, iGrants, teacher worksheets and verification information. If you want more information on other assessments, look for those prompt words on the bar on the left of the page and click on them. For EALRS visit [http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/EALR\\_GLE.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/EALR_GLE.aspx).

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### *WHAT DO CBAs HAVE TO DO WITH HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS?*

It is ultimately the teachers' responsibility to create the curriculum that they use in their classrooms – but if we want our heritage education programs to continue to be a viable part of the educational process, we will need to make them compatible, beneficial, and accessible. Let's look at the facts:

#### 1) CBA Requirements Present Challenges:

- *Teachers may find carving out time to integrate available museum or heritage organization resources into existing social studies curriculum difficult.* (All teachers are required to attend special classes on how to score the CBA projects – once again to ensure commonality, reliability, and fairness in scoring and grading.)
- *Schools may not have the financial resources or transportation options to allow or encourage teachers to visit museums or historical places/markers to allow students to take advantage of programs or primary source materials.*
- *Heritage Organizations may not have resources (personnel, time, or money) to re-develop or align existing materials to meet required Washington State EALRs or CBAs.*

#### 2) CBA Requirements Present Opportunities:

- *Aligning your programs to meet new classroom-based assessment expectations will promote the visibility of your museum or heritage organization.*
- *Aligning your programs to meet new classroom-based assessment expectations could increase museum visits and heritage education program usage.*
- *Promoting local historical education opportunities will encourage a positive identity and pride in local community history for local youth.*
- *Promoting local historical education opportunities will encourage a positive working relationship with the schools.*

- Creating a positive working relationship with schools could *lead to increased museum/historical society membership, a wider pool of volunteer and funding sources, and the possibility of artifacts/photograph donations* for your organizations.

### *THE BOTTOM LINE*

Unfortunately, no matter how much time, energy, and creativity you put into creating a CBA project or aligning existing programs, there is no guarantee that they will be used.

According to inventory results, teachers want materials/projects/curricula that fit into or coordinate with the curriculum that they have developed and plan on using with their students.

Teachers appreciate complementary well-thought out programs, projects, and resources.

OSPI realizes that it is time to make hard choices about what is truly essential for students to learn – educators cannot teach everything in depth. So, if we want to encourage schools and students to use the resources that we as heritage organizations have been collecting and preserving to share with future generations, then we must make our education programs:

Compatible (with school curriculum as well as CBA expectations)

Beneficial (to teachers, students, and heritage organizations)

Accessible (readily available in a common database/format)

### *HOW TO ALIGN AN EXISTING HERITAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM/PROJECT/CURRICULUM TO MEET CBA REQUIREMENTS*

- Become familiar with CBA concept and expectations
- Attend conferences, workshops, training opportunities that are currently being offered
- Study current models that have already been developed to align with CBAs
- Study a draft template (below) for what should be included in a CBA
- Ask for help: 4Culture offers technical assistance in working through questions concerning CBA expectations
- Take advantage of available resources that provide information about the CBAs: 4Culture's *Technical, Historical and Education Papers* (4Culture.org) and websites such as OSPI's (www.k12.wa.us)
- Target your audience: Do you want your materials to fit into local, county, state, nationwide, or international audiences? In many occasions, your specific area's historical identity and stories will be welcome in your local school districts – keeping it local could also make coordinating field trips to historical sites, museums more feasible.
- Contact a local school to identify a teacher who could tell you what they are looking for to supplement their curriculum and who would be willing to do a test-run of the project in class.
- Develop a "Bridging Document" to align a part of your current programs and projects with CBA expectations and requirements.
- Do not try to re-do or "bridge" the whole project (trunk, etc.). Pick one component of the existing program that could be expanded to fit into a CBA component.

- Eligible parties should consider applying for a 4Culture Heritage Education Program Grant to fund a heritage specialist to help with a project during the next available grant cycle.

### *HOW TO CREATE A NEW PROJECT OR CURRICULUM COMPONENT THAT MEETS CBA REQUIREMENTS*

- Become familiar with OSPI's CBA concept and expectations.
- Attend conferences, workshops, training opportunities that are currently being offered to provide information about CBAs
- Study current models that have already been developed to align with CBAs
- Study a draft template (below) for what should be included in CBA
- Ask for help: 4Culture offers technical assistance in working through questions concerning CBA expectations.
- Take advantage of available resources that provide information about the CBAs: 4Culture's *Technical, Historical and Education Papers* ([www.4Culture.org](http://www.4Culture.org)), and the OSPI website (<http://www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/WASL/SocialStudies/default.aspx>).
- Target your audience: Do you want your materials/project/program to appeal to local, county, state, nationwide, or international educational audiences? In many occasions, your specific area's historical identity and stories will be welcome in your local school districts. Keeping it local could also make coordinating field trips to your historical sites or museums more feasible.
- Contact your local school to identify a teacher who might be interested in working with you to test and evaluate your CBA project/component.
- Determine what the class might be covering specifically in their social studies curriculum this coming year(s) and what you might develop that would complement this planned program of study.
- Organize an advisory committee to assist in project decisions, suggestions.
- Familiarize yourself with existing CBA projects and contact project designers with questions and concerns. (Do not duplicate existing CBA components, if you have additional primary sources that would complement an existing CBA project, provide that project as a link.)
- Select an appropriate CBA rubric (*Dig Deep* is a good choice) and corresponding grade level for your project.
- Select a theme for the CBA project/component that fits into the curriculum but is interesting and relevant to the students' social studies needs. (An upcoming community anniversary, a unique local history story)
- Select a theme for which you have unique primary sources (should include a map) for research. Scan primary resources so they can be available in various formats.
- When developing your CBA component, create at least 4 questions that could be applicable for the project. That way the teacher could use the same theme and primary resources for four separate years without having to worry about students "borrowing" previous research.
- Design your CBA project so that it can be accessed on-line.

- List other resources that your organization has that would be valuable for other CBA or classroom activities or projects.
- After completing CBA project/component, allow teacher to give it a test run and provide comments and evaluation. Demonstrate CBA project at teachers' meeting or PTA meeting.
- Publicize your CBA project with a well-defined distribution plan: contact local schools, make it available on your organization's web-site or on those of OSPI, 4Culture (4Culture.org), HistoryLink (HistoryLink.org) or others which are being developed to host such project resources/components on-line.
- Eligible parties should consider applying to the Heritage Cultural Education Program to fund a heritage specialist to help with this project during the next grant cycle.

Further information on existing heritage programs and projects, visit [www.4Culture.org](http://www.4Culture.org) and view Heritage Education Papers, or make an appointment and visit the Heritage Education Resources Library at 4Culture office.

By Charles Payton 4/06

Updated 7/10

## Template for creating a primary source-based “INSTRUCTIONAL MODULE” for Social Studies Classroom-Based Assessments

This template is designed to help representatives from heritage organizations, archives, and other non-profit organizations develop instructional materials that can assist students in completing the Social Studies Classroom-Based Assessment models developed by OSPI. Please note it is not meant to be the only way to format these materials but merely one way that highlights the essential elements to be included.

**Essential Question** (*captures the big idea that transcends this particular topic or aspect of history and be transferable to other aspects of historical and social science inquiry*): e.g., What role should the government play in regulating the use of drugs and alcohol?

**Central Guiding Question** (*is the specific question students will attempt to address while completing the CBA*): e.g., What regulations should govern the use of drugs and alcohol in the State of Washington?

**Required Components of the CBA Rubric** (*this is, perhaps, the most important element of the template because it ensures that whatever instructional materials are developed align closely with the specific requirements in the CBA, which are the state’s Essential Academic Learning Requirements [EALRs]*): e.g., for the Middle School “Constitutional Issues” CBA, the required components are stated on the introductory page: “In a persuasive paper or presentation, students will:

1. Select an issue and explain how the issue connects with democratic ideals and/or constitutional principles.
2. Make references to the Constitution and explain their relationship to the groups involved with this issue.
3. Develop a position on the issue that attempts to balance individual rights and the common good.
4. Make explicit references within the text to sources that provide relevant information and/or support for the position on the issue.”

**Relevant Secondary Sources** (these will help provide students with some background on the issue. They should be concise, age-level appropriate with regards to the reading level, and limited in number [i.e., 1-3]): e.g., differing interpretations of the impact that Prohibition had on the country and/or the state.

**Relevant Primary Sources/Artifacts** (these will help students answer the central question and complete the required components of the CBA. These should also be concise, age-level appropriate with regards to the reading level, and limited in number [i.e., 4-10]. In addition, they should reflect multiple, even differing, perspectives on the question students are analyzing. You may also want to add a few guiding questions connected with each primary source to help students to see how each can help them to answer their original question and complete specific components of the CBA rubric.):

e.g., firsthand accounts of the effects of temperance policies in Washington State, oral histories relating the pros and cons of Prohibition, newspaper editorials from differing sides on this issue, etc...

**Support Materials** (OPTIONAL: These can include student checklists, graphic organizers, or other tools to help students collect and synthesize the ideas they have from the primary and secondary sources they have read and/or analyzed).

**Suggested Lesson Plans** (OPTIONAL: While most teachers want to develop their own lesson plans, including some suggested ideas for lessons or structured activities may be helpful in sparking this planning.)

**Culminating Activity** (this should be either the CBA verbatim or a project that includes the CBA along with additional components): e.g., Students will develop positions stating what role the government should play in regulating the use of drugs and alcohol and share these positions with a relevant government official/employee in the form of a letter or testimony delivered at a hearing.

This information is available upon request in alternative formats for persons with disabilities. TTY Relay: 711.

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Revise by Pat Filer 12/06  
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