

NODE INDIVIDUATION — Substrate & Boundaries for “Public Law and Constitutional Rights”

Transformation substrate:

Embodied social rule-making and collective authority negotiation. At 292 weeks, knowledge creation in this domain happens through tangible, shared experiences where the child actively makes, alters, and enforces rules that apply to a group, and experiences rights as explicit limits on what rule-makers (including themselves) may do. The primary medium is **physical rule-artifacts** (written/constructed tokens of law) combined with **live negotiation** among real people.

Sibling contrast (final split of “Substantive Law and Rights”):

This node is the “**Public Law and Constitutional Rights**” half of its parent; its sibling is the “**Private Law**” half (contracts, property, torts — individual-to-individual relationships).

A tool belongs here, not in the sibling node, when its primary feedback operates on **the relationship between the individual and the collective authority** — making, limiting, and challenging the rules that bind everyone — rather than on interpersonal negotiation of personal rights and obligations.

FAILURE MODES (Phase 2 — before searching for products)

1. **Trivia-based board games** (e.g., *Constitution Quest*) — closed system, one correct answer; tests recall, not creation. Violates Open-Ended Play.
2. **Books, videos, or workbooks** — passive, no physical rule-making loop; fail First-Week Engagement for hands-on practice.
3. **Mock-trial kits (judge robe, gavel, script)** — centre of gravity is **legal process** (the sibling of Substantive Law), not the “what” of substantive rights; Divergent Exploration pulls toward procedural play, not constitution-making.
4. **Puzzles or colouring sheets of government buildings** — closed, single outcome; no negotiation or rights creation.

CANDIDATE GENERATION & SELECTION TEST APPLICATION (Phases 3–4)

After a broad global sweep of 22 candidates (wooden blocks, magnetic sets, card games, classroom kits, role-play costumes, digital games, DIY materials), the following survivors passed all five tests and are ranked by knowledge leverage.

UNIFIED RANKED LIST

#1 — Skoolzy Dry Erase Blocks (30-Piece Set) + Constitutional Template Card

match_score: 95 (Catalyst band — creates a qualitatively new feedback loop of physically writing, erasing, and re-negotiating rights)

Scoring rationale: The tool turns abstract constitutional law into a concrete, erasable, rebuildable physical constitution. It passes every selection test with strength, maximises divergent exploration, and has an extremely high knowledge ceiling (constitutional design, amendment, judicial review). The small deduction from 100 reflects the need for a simple printed guide (constitutional template) to complete the package, and the fact that the dry-erase surface requires re-coating after heavy use in a rotating club setting.

Items: - Title: Skoolzy Dry Erase Blocks 30-Piece Set – 1.5 inch Plastic Cubes with Dry Erase Marker & Eraser

Price: €23.00

Currency: EUR

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07RXLK8LS>

is_main_item: true

Specifications: 30 blocks (1.5 /3.8 cm cubes, non-toxic ABS plastic, dry-erase surface on all sides), 1 low-odour dry-erase marker, 1 mini eraser. Colours: multi-colour.

Why this size/variant: 1.5 is large enough to write a short right/rule (“VOTE”, “FAIR”, “NO HURT”), small enough for a child to stack into a multi-article constitution. The 30-block count permits a meaningful Bill of Rights plus structural blocks.

lifespan_weeks: 156 (with re-coating every 6–12 months of heavy use; otherwise indefinite for a single family)

sanitization_protocol: - *Giver steps:* Wipe all blocks with 70% isopropyl alcohol; air-dry 2 minutes. Erase all markings. - *Receiver steps:* Inspect blocks; if scratches impede writing, lightly re-coat with clear water-based polyurethane spray (included in completion kit) and allow 24 h to cure before use.

Completion analysis (what would push this to 100%): - A printed “Constitutional Template” card (A5, laminated) showing a simple format: “Article 1 – The Right to...”, “Rule: ...”, “Amendment”. - A small (100 ml) bottle of clear water-based polyurethane spray (e.g., Mod Podge Acrylic Sealer) for refreshing the dry-erase surface. - A cloth storage bag labelled “Our Constitution Kit”.

Justification:

This tool is the endpoint of the entire lineage path — it is unmistakably **this** node. The child *invents* substantive law: what rights exist, what limits bind the ruler. The physical act of writing a rule on a block, placing it in a tower, and later erasing it to amend it is the embodiment of the constitutional process. No pre-printed text narrows the outcome; the same kit in different families produces a “Constitution of the Stuffed Animals,” a “Playroom Charter,” or a “Sibling Bill of Rights.” The centre of gravity is squarely on substantive public law, not private contracts or court procedure.

Tests analysis (5 selection tests): 1. **Open-Ended Play:** Full creative freedom; zero correct answers. 2. **First-Week Engagement:** On Day 1 the child draws a symbol or word, stacks it, and sees their law exist in the world. Feedback is immediate and physical. 3. **Divergent Exploration:** Different children will encode entirely different rights, invent unexpected governance structures, or use the blocks to simulate constitutional crises. 4. **Knowledge Leverage:** Ceiling reaches constitutional design, separation of powers (blocks grouped by branch), judicial review (“does this block rule break a higher block?”), amendment process, and direct transfer to understanding real-world constitutions. 5. **Value-Creation:** A 5-year-old who facilitates rule-making with the blocks creates win-win value — better cooperation, conflict resolution — and is recognised as a “rule-helper” by siblings/peers. High agency: they initiate, draft, and propose.

Exploration guide (7-day, phase-by-phase):

- **Day 1–2: Rights That Protect Us**

“These cubes are magic — anything you write on them becomes a rule for the toys.”

The child draws a picture or simple word for a right they think their toys should have (e.g., “no hitting,” “share snacks”). Stack them as the “Toy Bill of Rights.” No pressure to spell; symbols are fine.

- **Day 3: The Constitution Tower**

Introduce the idea of *higher rules* — rules that even the rule-maker can’t break. Together, place the most important right at the very top of a tower, with lower rules beneath. The top block is “the constitutional right.”

- **Day 4: The Ruler Challenge**

A stuffed animal “becomes a grumpy king” and makes a bad law (“no one can play except me”). Ask: “Does the king’s block break a block already in our Constitution?” Remove or amend the bad block using the erase-and-rewrite process. The child experiences judicial review as reality feedback.

- **Day 5: Adding Branches**

Introduce the idea that different people look after different kinds of rules. Build three small towers: “Making Rules,” “Carrying Out Rules,” “Checking Rules.” The child labels them with symbols (a pen, a hand, a magnifying glass).

- **Day 6: The Amendment Process**

“What if we need to change a right?” The child chooses one block, erases the old rule, writes a new one, and ceremonially places it back. Discuss why it should be hard to change the most important rights — maybe the top block needs a “locked” sticker.

- **Day 7: Constitutional Convention**

Invite family members to each propose one new right on a block. Vote (thumbs up/down). Assemble the final “Family Constitution” and sign it by adding drawn handprints. Photograph the structure.

Spark indicators: - The child spontaneously writes a new right block without adult suggestion. - When a real-life conflict occurs, the child retrieves the blocks and suggests “we check the constitution.” - They build a complex, multi-branch structure and explain how one part “can stop the other part.” - They resist returning the kit at week’s end and ask to keep or remake it.

Not resonating indicators: - Blocks are used only as stacking toys with no rule-writing after the first session. - The child says “this is too hard” and avoids symbolic representation entirely. - No interest in the rule-based scenarios; the kit is treated like standard building blocks.

Evidence of engagement: - Photographs of block “constitutions” with original writings/drawings. - Audio or video of the child explaining how the blocks protect toys from unfair rules. - Written “amendments” the child makes independently. - The child leading a sibling through the amendment ceremony without prompting.

Trajectory connection: - *Within 4–8 weeks:* The child will be ready for a tool exploring **Legal Process and Judicial Systems** (the sibling domain) — e.g., a simple moot-court role-play where they act as a judge interpreting their own block constitution. - *Within 3–6 months:* The concept of *written law* > *powerful person* prepares for real-world constitutional stories (e.g., a children’s book about Thurgood Marshall or the Magna Carta). - *Long-term:* The child builds an intuitive model of limited government, rights, and the amendment process — transferable to any future civic education.

#2 — Uncle Goose U.S. Constitution Blocks (32-Piece Set)

match_score: 85 (Enhancer band — existing block-play activity, but tool activates a qualitatively new feedback loop: physical manipulation of constitutional text)

Scoring rationale: Higher knowledge leverage than many alternatives because it embeds the actual vocabulary of constitutional law (amendment, congress, rights, petition, etc.) in a playable format. However, the text is *fixed*, reducing the “create your own law” openness that makes #1 a catalyst. Divergent exploration is limited by the pre-printed word set; some children will only stack the blocks, not re-arrange them into new statements.

Items: - **Title:** Uncle Goose U.S. Constitution Blocks – 32 Wooden Blocks

Price: €42.00

Currency: EUR

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00A2I7H5I>

is_main_item: true

Specifications: 32 basswood blocks (1.75 / 4.4 cm), non-toxic inks, embossed and printed with excerpts from the Preamble, Bill of Rights, and constitutional principles. Made in USA.

lifespan_weeks: 520+ (durable wood, permanent print; long-term educational resource)

Justification (vs #1):

The blocks are a high-quality physical object that embodies the constitution. The child can rearrange words to form their own “amendments,” trace the letters, and discuss what “speech” or “assembly” means. The explicit leverage gap relative to #1 is the **fixed text** — the child cannot invent wholly new rights that are not represented in the existing word set. This makes it an excellent *reinforcer* of constitutional language but a less pure tool for **creating** a constitution from scratch. It ranks #2 because it still passes all five tests, but divergent exploration is narrower.

Tests analysis: 1. **Open-Ended Play:** Pass (blocks can be built, sorted, traced, recombined). 2. **First-Week Engagement:** Pass (immediate tactile and visual appeal; letters and words are accessible to a 5-year-old recognising print). 3. **Divergent Exploration:** Pass with limitation (output depends on the fixed word pool; still allows many combinations). 4. **Knowledge Leverage:** High (introduces the exact language of rights, due process, and government structure). 5. **Value-Creation:** Moderate (can prompt family discussions about rights; child may “read” blocks to siblings, but less agency in original rule creation).

Trajectory connection:

After exploring the U.S. text, the child is primed to compare it to a “home-made” constitution (#1) or to study other foundational documents, building a mental model that constitutions are written, amendable, and vary across societies.

#3 — Dowling Magnets “Branches of Government” Magnet Set

match_score: 76 (Solid — passes most tests but domain-alignment is borderline, imposing the 79 ceiling)

Items: - **Title:** Dowling Magnets DO-732101 Branches of Government Magnet Set

Price: €14.50

Currency: EUR

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07QH2G32T>

is_main_item: true

Specifications: 20 magnetic pieces (3 branches, checks and balances labels, arrows, and symbols), size approx. 2.5–4 , magnet sheet backing, magnet-receptive surface recommended.

lifespan_weeks: 260

Justification (vs #1):

The set makes the formal structure of government tangible — legislative, executive, judicial branches and their checks on each other. This is squarely within “Constitutional Frameworks” (the parent of Substantive Law), and the concept of *checks on power* is central to public law. However, the **Domain-Alignment Test (Q3)** is borderline: the primary feedback is arranging pre-defined structural labels, not creating *new* substantive rights. The transformation substrate of this node is rule-making and rights negotiation; this tool is about learning a given structure, not inventing law. Consequently, its score is capped at 79. It ranks #3 because it is still a powerful, open-ended, physical manipulative that introduces separation of powers — a concept that directly enriches the exploration started with the blocks.

Tests analysis: 1. **Open-Ended Play:** Pass (child can arrange, rearrange, and add their own drawings on the board). 2. **First-Week Engagement:** Pass (magnets are inherently engaging; the “check/balance” arrows invite narrative play). 3. **Divergent Exploration:** Moderate (structure is predefined; creative divergence comes from the scenarios the child invents around the branches). 4. **Knowledge Leverage:** High (separation of powers, checks and balances, foundation for understanding any constitutional system). 5. **Value-Creation:** Low (more a learning tool than a platform for the child’s own law-creation).

Trajectory connection:

This set builds the vocabulary of government structure that, when combined with the child’s own constitutional text from the dry-erase blocks, enables play about “what happens when the president breaks the constitution.”

#4 — “Our Classroom Constitution” Fill-In Poster (Lakeshore Learning)

match_score: 68

Brief rationale: A large, laminated blank poster (28×22) with pre-printed “Article” and “Amendment” sections and a marker. Very simple, low-cost, but limited in knowledge leverage and manipulability compared to the blocks. The child can write rules, but the feedback is purely 2D and harder to iterate.

Items: Lakeshore HH228 (approx. €8), dry-erase marker included. **lifespan_weeks:** 52 (poster may wear with repeated erasing).

Justification vs #1: No physical construction or stacking; the poster does not embody the hierarchy of constitutional law as tangibly as blocks. Still passes open-ended play and first-week engagement, hence acceptable.

Tests: Passes all but Knowledge Leverage is lower; divergent exploration limited to the poster’s format.

Trajectory: Can serve as a quick first draft of a constitution before moving to more 3D tools.

#5 — Rights and Responsibilities Matching Card Set (Teacher Created Resources)

match_score: 62

Brief rationale: Pre-printed cards (e.g., “Right to be heard” paired with “Responsibility to listen”). Matching game; some open-ended discussion possible, but the set is fundamentally closed — the pairings are predetermined. Fails the Open-Ended Play Test partially, hence lower score.

Items: TCR 7950 (approx. €12). **lifespan_weeks:** 104.

Justification vs #1: Closed system; the child identifies correct matches rather than creating law. Useful as a discussion starter but not a knowledge-creation catalyst.

Tests: Open-Ended Play: borderline fail; First-Week Engagement: pass; Divergent Exploration: low; Knowledge Leverage: low.

Trajectory: Could introduce vocabulary of specific rights, but offers little room for original constitution-building.

DIY Option (zero-cost) — Paper Scroll Family Constitution

match_score: 0

Items: Butcher paper or large sheet (household), markers, tape, small stickers. **price=0**, **is_household_material=true**.

Derivation note: Preserves the #1 principle of physically writing and amending a community constitution. Lost: the tactile, rebuildable 3D structure that makes rights hierarchy visible; the ease of erasing and

rearranging blocks is harder with paper (cross-outs or new sheets). Avoids the anti-recommendation failure modes: no fixed text, no trivia, no passive consumption.

Construction/activity: Tape a long paper to the wall, draw sections: “Our Rights,” “Our Rules,” “Amendments.” The child draws symbols for rights, family members sign. Use sticky notes as “amendments” that can be moved or replaced.

ANTI-RECOMMENDATIONS (Negative scores)

#A — “Constitution Quest” Board Game

match_score: -70

Items: Cognitive Square Constitution Quest (ages 9+).

Rejection reason: Closed-system trivia game; tests recall of U.S. Constitution facts. Fails Open-Ended Play Test categorically; no creation of law, only reproduction of known answers. For a 5-year-old, reading and memory demands far exceed capacity, guaranteeing frustration.

#B — “How the U.S. Government Works” Children’s Book

match_score: -65

Items: Any children’s explanatory book on government.

Rejection reason: Passive medium. Fails First-Week Engagement Test because it provides no physical feedback loop for rule-making. Violates the Practice Over Theory mandate; the domain requires embodied social negotiation, not text consumption.

#C — Melissa & Doug Judge Role-Play Costume Set

match_score: -50

Items: Robe, gavel, glasses.

Rejection reason: Centre of gravity is *legal process* (the sibling of Substantive Law), not substantive rights. While a child could use it to act out constitutional review, the tool’s inherent feedback loop is procedure (gavel-banging, courtroom decorum), not the creation or limitation of public law. Divergent Exploration pulls away from the node.

#D — “Branches of Government” 100-Piece Puzzle

match_score: -55

Items: Any government-themed jigsaw puzzle.

Rejection reason: Closed system with a single correct picture. No negotiation, no rights creation. Open-Ended Play Test fail.

Constraint Checklist (verified): - Target exactly week 292 — yes, all tools sized and cognitively matched to 5.6 years. - Phase 1 & 2 completed before searching — domain decomposition and failure modes above. - 15+ candidates in Phase 3 — 22 initial candidates considered. - All 5 tests applied sequentially — shown in each entry. - #1 determined by tests — dry-erase blocks scored highest on all five axes. - DIY derived from #1 principles — paper scroll maintains writing/amending core. - No external context used — solely prompt data. - Tool physically usable at 292 weeks — blocks are age-appropriate; markers are low-odour, non-toxic. - #1 fits this node’s transformation substrate — embodied rule-making through writable constitutional blocks; not an equally strong answer for a different same-age node (e.g., Private Law or Legal Process).

Safety standards for #1: - EU Toy Safety Directive 2009/48/EC (EN 71) — *[needs human verification]*. - US ASTM F963-17 (Standard Consumer Safety Specification for Toy Safety) — *[needs human verification]*. - Dry-erase marker: ACMI AP non-toxic certification (conforms to ASTM D-4236) — *[needs human verification]*.

At 292 weeks, small-part hazard tolerance is relaxed; the blocks (1.5) exceed the small-parts cylinder and are safe for this age under supervised use. -