**Standard 8-3:** The student will demonstrate an understanding of South Carolina’s role in the development of the new national government.

**Enduring Understanding:**

Independence from Great Britain made the creation of a new national government and individual state governments imperative. To understand how and why these governments were created, the student will. . .

**8-3.3 Explain the basic principles of government as established in the United States Constitution**

**It is essential for students to know:**

From 1783 until 1789, the United States was governed by the Articles of Confederation. However, the Articles of Confederation government, which derived its powers from the states, was too weak to meet the needs of the new nation. To meet those deficiencies, the Constitution was drawn up in 1787, ratified in 1788 and went into effect in 1789.

The Constitution of the United States of America established a limited government based on power shared between the national and state governments. The Bill of Rights provided a written guarantee of individual rights. The Constitution is the highest law in the United States. All other laws must conform to the Constitution. Each state also has a state constitution. The constitutions of the states are the highest law for that state. But the United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

The basic principles of American government include:

 *Popular Sovereignty- (Democracy)* The authority for government flows from the people. (Amendment IX and the Preamble)

 *Individual Rights-* Unalienable rights are guaranteed to all citizens in the Preamble and the Bill of Rights.

 *Federalism-*The federal system divides governmental powers between national government and the governments of the states. (10th Amendment)

 *Separation of Powers* - The structure of the new national government established three separate branches of government to limit the power of any one branch. The Legislative Branch is the United States Congress which makes the laws. Congress is a two-house legislature. The Judicial Branch consists of federal courts. The highest court is the Supreme Court which determines if laws made by Congress are constitutional. The Executive Branch is headed by the President and carries out the laws. The Vice President and the Secretaries of all departments are also in the Executive branch.

 *Checks and balances* - Each branch can check the power of the other. These checks keep any one branch from gaining too much power (Articles I, II, III). An example of checks and balances is the process by which a bill becomes a law. The bill must be passed by both houses of the Congress. Then President may sign it or veto it. If the bill is vetoed, then the Congress may override the president’s veto with a 2/3 vote.

 *Limited Government* - Powers of the government are restricted by the Constitution as stated in Articles I, II, and III and by the Bill of Rights which protects the rights of the individual against excessive power by the government.

 *Representative Democracy (republicanism)* - The constitution recognizes that the authority of the government derives from “We, the people.” Voters hold the sovereign power but elect representatives to exercise power for them, including the president, Senators and Representatives (The Preamble and Article I, II).

Students should know that most state governments mirror the organization of the national government, with an executive, legislative and judicial branch including the concepts listed above, such as checks and balances.