

RULE OF LAW LESSON: WHAT IS THE RULE OF LAW?

Description:

This lesson is designed to help the teacher and the legal volunteer instruct students on defining the rule of law and the differences between our system of laws and that of other countries.

Virginia SOLs covered:

CE.1g – The student will (TSW) develop the social studies skills citizenship requires, including the ability to (g) select and defend positions in writing, discussion, and debate.
CE.2a – TSW will demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of American constitutional government by explaining the fundamental principles of the ... rule of law....

Objectives:

1. To use a graphic organizer to identify important laws and to identify what makes our system of law different from other countries.
2. To create and defend a personal definition of the rule of law.
3. To arrive at a consensus in answering the question, “What is the rule of law?”
4. To test their collective definition of the rule of law by engaging the visiting lawyer in a dialogue that focuses on the United States being a nation of laws not people.

Suggested Grade Levels:

Civics and Economics, seventh and eighth grades

Materials Needed:

1. Graphic Organizer: *What Is the Rule of Law?* (See attachment.)
2. VBA video and projector equipment
3. Rule of Law Posters

Time:

One class period

Procedure:

1. Place copies of graphic organizer on student desks prior to beginning of class.
2. Instruct students to complete the graphic organizer as directed.
3. After students have completed their graphic organizer, they share their responses with the class and the visiting lawyer for discussion.
4. After the discussion, view the VBA video and discuss its content as it applies to the students’ responses.

Video points to remember:

- We are a nation of laws ... not a nation of people.
- Everyone is treated fairly and equally under the same set of laws.
- The laws allow people to enjoy a peaceful existence with others.
- Our laws are based on the Constitution and protected by the courts.

- No one is above the law ... no one is below the law.
- The “rule of law” is like the rules of the road ... you must follow the laws to protect the safety of all.
- The “rule of law” is an agreement that everyone will play by the rules.
- We are governed by rules that are in the best interest of our country ... not in the best interest of us personally.
- In America, we follow the “rule of law.” We do not serve men or women; we serve “The Law.”

7. Allow time for the lawyer to summarize the lessons learned from the class activity.

NOTE: The teacher may want to create his or her own questions for the graphic organizer after planning conversations with the visiting lawyer. The teacher may also want to organize students in pairs to complete the graphic organizer and then have each pair report out to the class, defending their collaborative responses.

See page 3 for model.

Graphic Organizer: *What Is The Rule of Law?*

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| Identify what you consider to be the five most important laws: | What makes our system of law different from many other countries? |
| What is your definition of the rule of law? | |

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