

RULE OF LAW LESSON: RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Description:

The teacher and visiting legal volunteer will use this lesson to discuss with students the relationship between “personal rights” and the rule of law.

Virginia SOLs covered:

CE.1g - The student will (TSW) develop the social studies skills citizenship requires, including the ability to ... 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 (complete a chart) to answer specific questions about the concept of "rights."
2. To identify examples and non-examples of "rights."
3. To identify the connection between "rights" and the rule of law.
4. To discuss how the rule of law ensures that everyone's rights are protected.
5. To engage the visiting lawyer in a dialogue that focuses on the importance of the rule of law in their daily lives.

Suggested Grade Levels:

Civics and Economics, seventh and eighth grades

Materials Needed:

1. Chart: "Rights and 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 chart on student desks prior to beginning of class.
2. Instruct students to complete the chart as directed, making sure to answer each question.
3. After students have completed their charts, they share their responses with the class and the visiting lawyer for discussion. Encourage them to share personal experiences or to use current events to support their explanations and further the 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."
5. Allow time for the lawyer to summarize the lessons learned from the class activity.

NOTE: The teacher may want to organize students in pairs to complete the chart and then have each pair report out to the class, defending their collaborative responses.

See page 3 for model.

"RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW"

Directions: Fill in the chart below with as much information and as many details as you can. Be sure to address each section of the chart.

Meaning: What does it mean to have rights? Inalienable rights?	Importance: Why do Americans care so much about rights?
Examples: Rights granted to us by the Constitution	Non-examples: Rights not granted to us by the Constitution
These Constitutional rights make us a nation of laws, not people. What does this mean? Provide examples that illustrate this concept. Provide examples which you think illustrate that this concept doesn't always prove true.	

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