



The
New Hampshire Bar Association

presents:

“A Lawyer and Judge in Every School”
Program

Advice to Lawyers and Teachers on Preparing and Presenting Law-Related Education Material in the Classroom

Adapted from the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law Technical Assistance Paper entitled “Advice to Resource Persons and Teachers on Classroom Assistance in Law-Related Education.”

1. PRE-VISIT COMMUNICATION

A phone conversation or informal meeting should take place prior to the attorney’s visit. The teacher needs to convey to the lawyer-partner the following information:

- a. Goals and objectives of unit being taught, what topic areas have been covered so far and what follow-up activities will take place after the lawyer’s visit.
- b. Proposed topic for the lawyer and specific objectives of the lesson. Please note that the New Hampshire Bar Association has provided the lawyer and teacher with access to educational materials designed especially for use in conjunction with the “A Lawyer in Every School” Program. The teacher and lawyer team may choose any topic and develop or use other resource materials.
- c. Number and age of students in class, including general reference to ability levels (reading, verbal, reasoning, etc.) and other information (e.g., personal interests, economics and social background, likelihood of prior personal experience with criminal or civil law or legal process).
- d. Length of class, typical methods used by teacher (lecture, roleplays, question and answer, simulations, small group work, field trips, etc.), and the discussion of suggested methods and teacher’s role during the lawyer’s visit. (See suggested methods discussion under 2b).
- e. Date, time and exact location for visit. Discuss likelihood of cancellation by lawyer or school schedule change. Exchange home and work phone numbers.

2. DESIGNING THE LESSON FOR THE VISIT

The teacher and lawyer should:

- a. Agree on specific objectives for the topic selected. Select a narrow topic for each class; broad overviews or attempts to cover too much usually don't work.
- b. Select methods and materials to use in the class:

Methods: Use more than one method during each class. Don't just lecture, but involve students through asking them questions, posing hypotheticals, calling for different opinions on controversial issues, conducting a roleplay with students or having the lawyer and teacher act one out, or having students conduct discussions or otherwise work in small groups.

Materials: Use educational information prepared and provided by the New Hampshire Bar Association or part of students' textbook, such as outlines, list of hypotheticals, etc. Students should not be asked to read much material during class. Cases or examples which are selected should be balanced. For example, teachers and lawyers should be careful to avoid selecting cases which show exclusively either that the legal system has treated people fairly or that it has treated people unfairly. Lawyers and teachers should discuss what materials should be assigned ahead of time.

3. PREPARING THE STUDENTS FOR THE VISIT

On the day preceding the visit, the teacher should tell the students who the visitor will be, why he or she is coming, and what will happen in the class when the lawyer is there. Students can be assigned certain readings ahead of time. Concepts which will maximize the visit can be taught before hand or each student can prepare a list of questions or a specific topic to direct to the lawyer. The importance of the visit can be stressed and the decorum and participation expected from students during the visit should be discussed.

4. THE CLASSROOM PRESENTATION

The lawyer should:

- a. Make references to what happens in the real world, especially situations which relate to young people.
- b. Be enthusiastic and lively, keep eye contact and use humor.
- c. Be objective about the legal system, and point out its strong points, flaws, and how it might be improved.
- d. Be certain that both sides of controversial issues are brought out either by the students, the lawyer or the teacher.
- e. Frequently ask students if they have questions about what's being covered (but don't let tangents or long personal fact patterns take too much time). Admit when you don't know an answer and state you'll get the answer back to them.
- f. Personalize the topic by mentioning things that happened to you and by asking students if they or their families have had personal experiences with the topic.

- g. Involve the teacher in the class and if possible, co-teach it. Though the lawyer may lead the class, the teacher can and should make introductions and state objectives for the class, raise clarifying questions or issues which have been neglected, help focus on rambling discussion, step in if problems occur, participate in a roleplay, etc.

5. DEBRIEFING THE VISIT AND FOLLOW-UP

During the class following the visit, the teacher should discuss the visit with the students. What were the major points made by the lawyer? How did the class react to the visitor and the issue presented? Do they believe the use of the lawyer helped them learn about the topic?

If a lawyer is an advocate of a particular point of view, it is important to bring out the other side in the debriefing discussion. Consider asking students if the lawyer had any particular biases. To provide a balanced approach, it is also advisable to invite another speaker who advocates the opposite position either at the same time or shortly following the visit.

Follow-up activities to learn more about the topic should also be considered.

6. EVALUATING THE CLASS

The teacher should evaluate the success of the class and convey comments to: Law-Related Education Coordinator, New Hampshire Bar Association, 112 Pleasant Street, Concord, New Hampshire 03301. The teacher may also want to convey comments or thanks directly to the lawyer.