

The Constitution, Courts, and Candid Conversations

The Constitution, Courts, and Candid Conversations is a highly interactive Q/A session with a judge and volunteer attorneys that stimulates students to prepare and ask meaningful questions about issues, observations, and concerns about the courts. The judge and attorneys create a safe and welcoming environment for students to ask tough questions and to break through stereotypes. The program can be 50 minutes or 90 minutes in courtrooms, classrooms, or community settings. It is effective in-person and in the virtual environment. The program requires one federal judge to preside and two or three volunteer attorneys, keeping in mind many facets of diversity and inclusion and many types of legal careers.

Student Preparation

In the Preparatory Class, the teacher shows the [Rule of Law Video](#) and the [Civility Video](#). Students fill out the [Civility Self-Reflection Quiz](#). Students brainstorm questions 1) About the rule of law video and 2) About the judge's and attorneys' career choices, their experiences in the law, and any law-related issues of importance to the students.

Judge and Attorney Preparation

Think about how to present your heart reason for choosing the law. It's not about your resume, it's about your feelings, values, adversities, successes. Think about :

- A moment, or a life circumstance that made you want a career in the law.
- What you were like in high school and how that predicted – or didn't predict – your career choice.
- How you can counter the stereotype that law is about the money; arguing, and a win/lose mentality.

Think about what you can say during the program:

- To proactively encourage students to ask questions about what is really on their mind.
- To invite students to consider careers in the law and remind them that they have the power to participate in the system as a judge, lawyer, juror, journalist, and engaged, voting citizen.

Types of Questions Students Have Asked the Judge and Attorneys During Candid Conversations

Personal – Your Journey

- Challenges and Obstacles
- Help Along the Way and How to Get It
- Dealing with Discrimination Then and Now
- Factors Impacting Your Success in High School, College, Law School, Now
- How Has Your Life Prepared You to Be a Judge/Attorney
- Can You Have a Personal Life and a Career in the Law?

Courts – Your Experiences and Perspectives

- Personal Opinions v. Responsibilities as a Judge
- Ethical Dilemmas for Lawyers, e.g., Representing a “Guilty” Defendant
- Role of Public Opinion in Taking Clients and in Making Judicial Decisions
- Dealing with Biases in Yourself and Others: Race, LGBTQ+ Issues, Socio-Economic
- Examples of Difficult Cases/Decisions That Would Be Meaningful to Students