

**Civil Discourse and the Constitution: Candid Conversations**

**Candid Conversations** is a 50-minute to 90-minute class period that a federal judge and volunteer attorneys spend with high school students either virtually or in person. The experience is an opportunity to have an open conversation, to ask questions about issues of concern to students, to learn about the court and the Constitution, and to gain exposure to careers in the law. The goal is to have as many students speak as possible.

**Teacher-Student Advance Work: One Class Period** (*Details are in the Handout for Teachers*)

**Helpful Preparation:** The teacher leads students through [The Question-Formulation Technique](#) to develop, refine, and prioritize questions that students want to ask on any topic. Spontaneous questions, and inquiries about the personal journey of the judge and attorneys are welcome and encouraged.

**About the Question Asking:** The students bring their written questions to the program. During the event, the teacher calls on students to voice their prepared questions **and** their spontaneous questions that come up in the course of the conversation. Follow-up questions, and unplanned questions are expected and highly encouraged.

**Program Protocol:** Students stand when addressing the judge and attorneys. They introduce themselves by first and last names every time they speak. They address the judge as Judge \_\_\_\_\_. The attorneys are addressed as Ms. or Mr.

*(15 minutes)*    **Opening**

The teacher opens the class and turns the program over to the judge. The judge and volunteer attorneys introduce themselves (about 2 – 3 minutes each). Each gives their heart reason for choosing the law, rather than giving a resume review. They offer a brief description of an experience, or a turning point, or a moment that influenced their career choice. If that moment was in high school, all the better. They encourage students to ask questions on any topic, including careers in the legal system.

*(30 minutes)*    **Q/A Candid Conversation** (*This section can expand if there is more time available.*)

The teacher calls on students to raise questions they developed in their prior classroom activity, as well as their spontaneous questions during the session. The judge addresses the questions and asks the attorneys to add their comments, or the judge refers a question directly to the attorneys. The judge wraps up the Q/A by inviting students to consider careers in the legal system.

*(5 minutes)*    **Written Feedback**

The students fill out the feedback forms that the teacher collects and e-mails to the local court contact or to the national outreach manager for the federal courts Rebecca Fanning at [rebecca\\_fanning@ao.uscourts.gov](mailto:rebecca_fanning@ao.uscourts.gov)

**The Teacher Dismisses the Class.**