

LESSON PLANNING GUIDE

Lawyers in the Classroom

LAW DAY | CONSTITUTION DAY 2026

Overview

This guide picks up where the Lawyers in the Classroom Volunteer Toolkit left off. You've connected with a school and confirmed a class and a date. This guide is about one thing: planning the time you'll spend in the room — so that walking in feels easy, not daunting.

You don't need to build a lesson from scratch. The sample lessons and lesson building toolkits have already done that. Your job is to pick a grade-appropriate lesson, shape it to your experience and show up. The goal isn't to deliver information perfectly, but to guide the students through discovering it themselves.

And remember, Constitution Day is the anchor, but everything here works any day of the school year. **Every day is a good day to teach about the Constitution.**

New to the program or still looking for a school?

The Volunteer Toolkit has everything you need. Your home base for outreach guidance and templates to lesson planning resources is www.wsba.org/classroom-ambassadors.

NEED SOMETHING SPECIFIC, FAST?

This guide covers everything so you have the answers at your fingertips — but don't read it from top to bottom. If you know what you need, use the linked contents above to jump straight there. Or browse the web version of this guide for a visual map of every section and resource:

www.wsba.org/classroom-ambassadors



How to Use This Guide

This guide is comprehensive by design, so everything lives in one place. **Plan** and **Visit** sections are your quick lay of the land; **Choose** is a curriculum and lesson library you dip into for your grade band to build your agenda and presentation — not a chapter you read start to finish. **Follow-Up** closes the loop by reporting back on your experience.

Use this guide your way and go make Constitution Day yours!



PLAN

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 - [Core Constitutional Ideas](#) – Principles to teach
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VISIT

- [Your Visit At-a-Glance](#)
 - [Navigating the Classroom](#) – Tips for basic classroom-management
 - [Visit Agenda and Tips](#) – Do's & don'ts plus guidance to shape your visit
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 - [Lesson Building Toolkits](#) – Browse by grade level ([K-5](#) | [6-8](#) | [9-12](#))
 - [Constitution Day Curriculum Library](#) – Browse by type and content
 - [Additional Resources:](#)
 - Slide deck template
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FOLLOW-UP

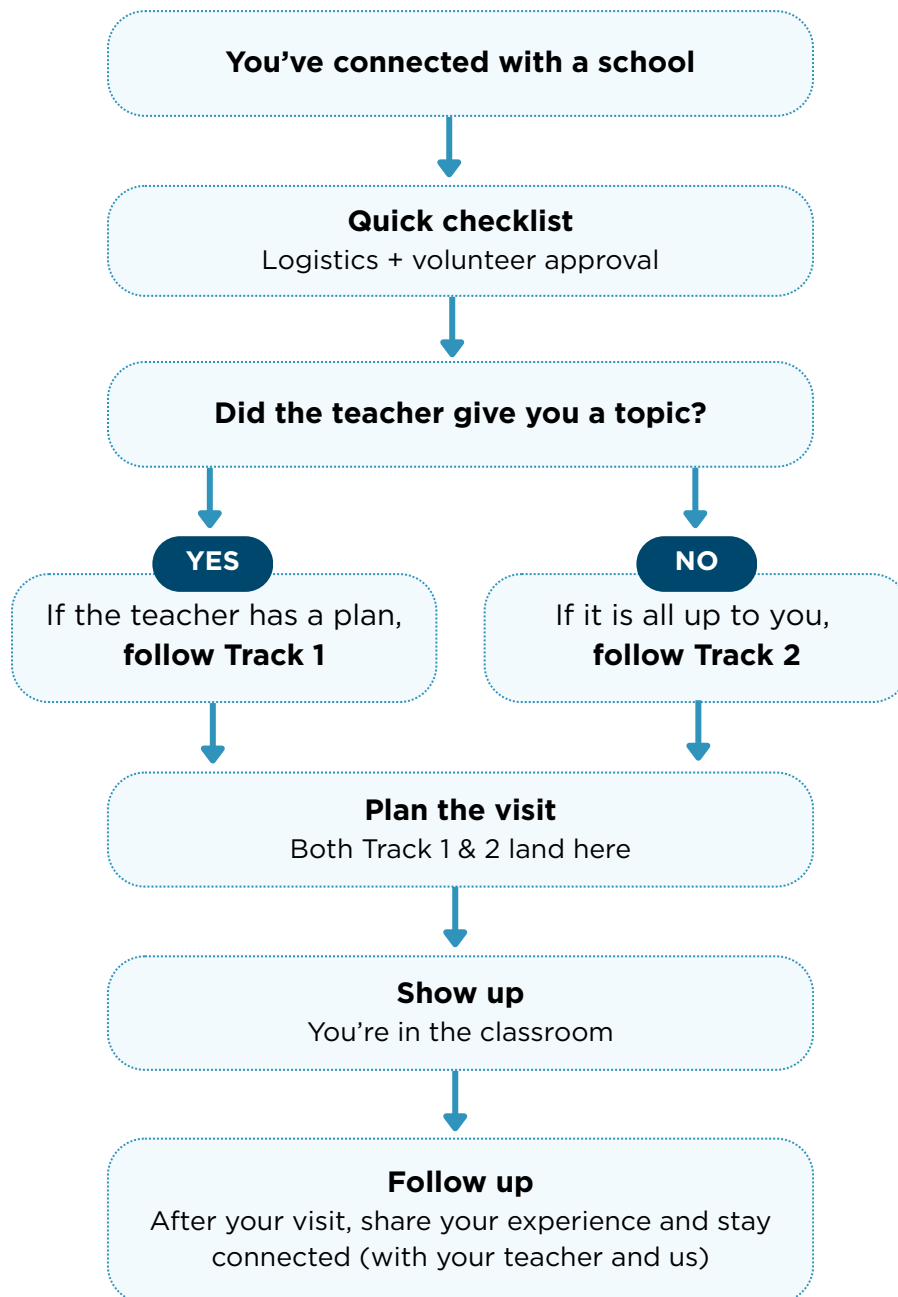
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PLAN

Your Journey At-a-Glance

The visual flowchart below shows key touchpoints of your planning journey. You've made contact with your school or teacher, have a class and a date confirmed for your visit. From here, planning splits into two tracks depending on one thing: whether the teacher handed you a lesson or left it up to you.



1

TRACK 1

Teacher
has a lesson
or ideas
already

The hardest decision is already made. Your job is to run with it.

- **Confirm the lesson, topic, and grade.** Get the specifics — the exact lesson or topic, grade level, and how long you'll have. In writing, if you can.
- **Skim it and gather materials.** Pick a single ready-to-run lesson from the Constitution Day Curriculum Library or Lesson Toolkit that aligns (or ask the teacher to share) and note anything to prepare or print. Be sure to land at least two core Constitutional ideas.
- **Map it onto the period.** Slot the lesson's activity into Part 4 — the main event — and build the rest of the class period around it. [See Your Visit At-a-Glance.](#)
- **Prep and confirm logistics.** Confirm room, timing, and AV needs (projector, screen, speakers) with the teacher — and if mock trial's part of your visit, start earlier: scripts and role assignments need lead time. Then build your full presentation, from opening hook to closing takeaway — don't wing it. [See Visit Agenda & Tips.](#)

2

TRACK 2

You have
free range

A blank page feels bigger than it is. Here's how to decide quickly and not overthink it.

- **Pick your grade band and format.** Think about which age group excites you and what kind of session you'd enjoy running — an activity, a discussion, or a read-aloud. (Step 1 of the [Volunteer Toolkit](#) can help if you're undecided.)
- **Choose one lesson from the library.** Pick a single ready-to-run lesson from the Curriculum Library or Lesson Toolkit that fits your grade and lands at least two core Constitutional ideas.
- **Run it by the teacher.** A quick check-in early on goes a long way: "I'm thinking of [lesson] — does that work for your class?" It's their room, and a quick confirmation avoids surprises.
- **Map it onto the period.** Drop your chosen activity into Part 4 — the main event — and build the rest of the class period around it. [See Your Visit At-a-Glance.](#)
- **Prep and confirm logistics.** Confirm room, timing, and AV needs (projector, screen, speakers) with the teacher — and if mock trial's part of your visit, start earlier: scripts and role assignments need lead time. Then build your full presentation, from opening hook to closing takeaway — don't wing it. [See Visit Agenda & Tips.](#)

Quick Checklist

Before You Start Planning

You've connected with a school — nice work! Here are a few logistics to lock down to make everything downstream easier and tell you which planning track you're on:

- ☐ **Start your clearance early.** Ask your teacher or school contact for the school's volunteer application for the 2026/27 year — usually a quick online form with a code of conduct to sign. Approval can take several weeks, so kick this off early rather than waiting until closer to your visit.
-
- ☐ **Be mindful of back-to-school timelines.** Teachers typically return full-time in the final week of August (some schools start a little earlier, in mid-August), so before then, but principals and front office staff — who tend to work through the summer — are a good first point of contact. And remember there's no hard deadline: September 17 is the anchor date the campaign is built around, but any day can be Constitution Day — a visit in October or later works just as well.
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- ☐ **The key question: does the teacher already have a lesson or topic in mind?** Their answer decides your planning track (see next section below).
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- ☐ **Ask what the class is studying and what the teacher wants students to walk away with.** Match that goal to your lesson's stated objectives — a quick meeting of the minds so you're both clear on what success looks like. Also ask about any upcoming field trips or school events; a Capitol trip or courthouse visit is a natural tie-in worth building around.
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- ☐ **Scope the visit:** Ask the teacher how much they want to focus the Constitution lesson versus career exploration — most teachers love this part, so better to plan upfront. Trying to do both well in one visit is a stretch. If career exploration is a priority, consider splitting into two visits or letting that lead and keeping the civics light.
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- ☐ **Confirm the basics with your teacher:** grade, class size, exactly how long you'll have, the room and your A/V needs. Periods vary — often up to 60 minutes on paper but getting students settled in eats into that. Arrive at least 10 minutes early so you're not losing usable time at the front.

CONTACT US

We're here if you need us — email lawyersintheclassroom@courts.wa.gov any time before, during, or after your visit.

Core Constitutional Ideas

Whatever lesson you teach, make sure it lands at least two of these core ideas — widely recognized principles that sit at the heart of what the Constitution is and means. They're a starting point, not a checklist. Make sure they align with the specific objectives your teacher has for the visit, matching your lesson and grade level. Fewer ideas taught well, with room for discussion, will land better than a rushed survey.

1



The rule of law

No one is above the law — not even the government. The same rules apply to everyone.

2



We the people

Government's power comes from the people — students have a voice through voting, juries, and speaking up.

3



Rights & liberties

The Constitution protects freedoms — speech, religion, and fair treatment — for everyone who lives here.

4



Equality & fairness

Everyone is treated equally under the law — a promise the country is continuously striving to keep.

5



Checks & balances

Government power is divided among branches so no one part can take over — and courts decide independently.

6



Civic agency

The Constitution was designed to change — amendments make it a living framework that every generation helps to shape.

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VISIT

Your Visit At-a-Glance

Plan for 50 usable minutes — most periods are scheduled for 60 minutes on paper but settling in and end-of-period wind-down eat into that. The chart below shows how those minutes break down across the key phases of your visit. The full agenda and guidance for each phase follows.

Note: Only have 45 minutes? Trim your introduction and the framing — not the activity. The main event is where students will remember you.

6%

Welcome and who you are

Introduce yourself — make the Constitution feel personal
~3 minutes

10%

Why this year, why the Constitution

Set the stakes — introduce your two core ideas
~5 minutes

10%

Key takeaways for students

Frame what students should watch for in the activity
~5 minutes

40%

The main event

Activity or discussion — the heart of the visit
~20 minutes

34%

Wrap-up, Q&A, and career conversation

Land the plane, open the floor, plant a seed
~17 minutes



DO'S

- **Set expectations upfront.** Kids crave boundaries. If the teacher hasn't already, spend the first 2 minutes setting 2-3 simple ground rules (e.g., "Raise your hand to speak," "Listen when others speak").
- **Speak in plain, punchy language.** Translate legal concepts into analogies they care about — a contract breach is a broken promise to a friend; intellectual property is who owns a video game skin.
- **Pivot when you lose the room.** Glazed eyes or rising chatter? Abort the lecture. Ask a question, try a turn-and-talk (60 seconds, classmates turn to whoever is sitting next to them), or call on a student to summarize. For younger rooms, a 60-second brain break works too — stretch arms wide like the stripes on a flag, then reach up for the stars.
- **Move around.** Walk the aisles while you talk. Standing behind a desk creates distance that invites distraction.
- **Give yourself a timer.** A countdown on your phone or the board keeps you on track and gives students a heads-up before transitions. Both of you will thank you for it.



DON'TS

- **Don't count on the room going quiet for you.** Before you start: ask the teacher what quiet-signal the class already uses.
- **Don't lecture for more than 7 minutes straight.** Break it up with a question, a scenario, or a quick activity. Back-and-forth beats monologue every time.
- **Don't forget whose room it is.** If something's off, the teacher will step in to handle it — and that's a good thing.
- **Avoid legalese.** If you use precedent, liability, or brief, define it immediately in plain terms. One sentence is all it takes.
- **Don't debate a student.** If someone gets combative, acknowledge them briefly ("good point to dig into"), say you'll follow up after class, and move on. Don't take the bait.
- **Don't race.** Silence is a tool. A pause after a question gives students time to think — resist the urge to fill it.

Pro-tip

Want to dig deeper? A veteran educator breaks down these dynamics in real-time:

[My 5 Cs of Classroom Management \(Edutopia\)](#)

Visit Agenda & Tips

1. Welcome and who you are

Goal: Set a warm, curious vibe. Students who feel comfortable will participate more — and that’s what makes the visit memorable. Be a real person before you’re a lawyer.

Before you start: Briefly check in with the teacher not just about logistics already covered in the planning section, but about anything live that day (a student who had a hard morning, a sensitive topic to avoid, whether the class runs loud). Thirty seconds at the top makes a real difference.

DO THIS:

- Introduce yourself by first name, where you’re from, and what you do in plain words (“I’m a lawyer” — or judge, paralegal, and so on).
- Give a 2–3 sentence bio in kid terms: What kind of law you do, what a normal day looks like, one thing you like about it.
- Say why you’re there today: You pledged, along with hundreds of legal professionals across Washington, to connect with and visit a classroom around Constitution Day.

GRADE NOTES:

- **K–5:** Keep the bio concrete — “I help people who are having a disagreement figure it out fairly.” Skip the jargon.
- **6–8:** Open with a hook — “Has anyone here ever thought something was unfair? That’s basically my whole job.”
- **9–12:** You can be candid about what the work is really like, including the hard parts.

Pro-tip

Ask the teacher to introduce you briefly first. It gives you a soft landing and a little authority in the room.

2. Why this year, why the Constitution

Goal: Set the stakes and introduce the core ideas you chose.

Protect the activity: With 50 minutes or less, something has to give — where you can cut back will be during the framing and takeaways sections upfront — not the main event. That’s where students will remember you.

DO THIS:

- Name the moment: 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence (1776). The country is having a big birthday — and the next 250 years belong to them.
- Explain the Constitution simply: it’s the country’s founding document — a set of promises about fairness, rights, and how we make decisions together. It belongs to everyone, including them.
- Work in the two core Constitutional ideas, in plain language.
- Add one honest beat: it’s a work in progress. The promise hasn’t always matched reality, and each generation works to close that gap. That’s the invitation to them.

GRADE NOTES:

- **K-5:** “Promises our country made to everyone who lives here.” Try the rulebook metaphor — a game with no rules isn’t fun or fair.
- **6-8:** Connect to their lives — rights at school, what happens when rules aren’t followed fairly.
- **9-12:** You can introduce tension — an independent judiciary, checked power, rights that have been fought for. Honest, not preachy.

Pro-tip

Don’t lecture the history. Two or three sentences of framing, then make it about them. A throughline that works at every grade: “The next 250 years are yours to lead.”

3. What it means for you: 2-3 takeaways

Goal: Set up what the students should watch for ahead of the activity. These takeaways pair with your two Constitutional core ideas: the principles are what the Constitution is; the takeaways are why it matters to them. Make it personal and portable — they should leave holding onto a couple of ideas.

Before you start: Write your takeaways on the board. It signals to students that the visit has structure and they’re expected to track it — and it gives you a natural anchor to return to during the debrief.

Pick 2-3 takeaways (no more). Some options to choose from:

- The law belongs to you. It’s not just for lawyers — it’s a tool everyone gets to use.
- Your voice counts. Speaking up about something unfair is how the system stays honest.
- You can be part of this — as a voter, a juror, a leader, or a lawyer or judge someday.
- Fairness is something we build, not something we’re handed.

DO THIS:

- Say each takeaway in a sentence, give one concrete example from their world, then move on. This is a 5-minute beat, not a lecture — the activity is where it all comes together.

GRADE NOTES:

- **K-5:** One or two takeaways, very concrete.
 - **6-8:** Tie each to a recent example or a quick scenario.
 - **9-12:** Invite pushback — let them test the idea.
-

4. The main event — activity or discussion

Goal: This is the heart of your visit. The most memorable route is an interactive activity — kids remember what they do, not just what they hear — but it’s not the only one. Pick the format you’ll be most engaging in, because a confident speaker beats a shaky activity every time.

This guide doesn’t prescribe the format. If you run an activity, choose one from the Constitution Day Curriculum Library or Lesson Toolkit, that fits your grade and core ideas — no need to

invent anything. A few directions, by grade:

- **K-5:** Rules-of-the-game activities, simple fairness scenarios, simplified mock-trial roles.
- **6-8:** Short debates, “what rights do you actually have at school?”, a statutory-interpretation puzzle (“No Vehicles in the Park”), an intro to the Bill of Rights.
- **9-12:** A full mock trial, a free-speech or civil-liberties debate, constitutional-reasoning exercises.

Read aloud and discuss (especially K-3). The lowest-prep route, and a good first visit: bring a short civics-themed picture book, read it aloud, then talk it through. The book carries the front half (10-12 minutes), so your job is to draw out the discussion — where the civics actually lands. Tying the story back to one core idea with a few “what would you do?” or “was that fair?” questions. Because the read and discussion needs more room, keep your intro and wrap-up short to fit. See the list of read-aloud books below.

If you’d rather talk, build it around your two core ideas — a real case told grade-appropriately, a “what would you do?” scenario, or a few questions you put to the room. A short video clip (two to five minutes) can anchor the talk or kick off discussion. Aim for back-and-forth, not a monologue. See the short video picks below.

- *Precautionary tip: download or cue the clip ahead of time — don’t count on playing it live from a link.*

Working with your teacher in the room — consider inviting them to participate. They can model engagement for students, play a role in the mock trial, add context you don’t have, or simply jump in when the room needs a nudge. If things go sideways, a quick glance their way is all you need.

Pro-tip

Keep it simple, one thing done well beats three rushed ones. It’s a conversation with the teacher — their classroom, their call if they have a preference — so land on something you’ll enjoy running. Whatever you choose, build in a moment to set it up and a moment to debrief (“What did that show us?”).

5. Wrap-up, Q&A and career conversation

Goal: Land the plane, open the floor, and plant a seed about what a life in law looks like. This is often the best part of the visit — protect this time. If you’re running long in the activity, trim there, not here. Consider asking the teacher upfront whether students will be more curious about the profession and your personal career journey — most will say yes. For many students, you’re the first legal professional they’ve met.

DO THIS:

- Tie back to the opening: 250 years ago, people made some promises; today those promises are theirs to keep and improve.
- Offer one forward-looking line: someday they’ll vote, serve on a jury, lead something — maybe even practice law. The country they’ll build is up to them.
- Open the floor. If it’s quiet, prime the pump with a question you’ll answer yourself (“A lot of people ask if being a lawyer is like on TV — want to know?”).

- Keep 2–3 of your own questions ready in case the room is shy.
- Name the range: lawyers, judges, paralegals, legal aides, clerks — lots of ways to work in and around the law. You don't have to be a lawyer to be part of justice.
- Connect it back: the skills they're already building — making an argument, listening, weighing evidence, standing up for fairness — are the skills this work is built on.
- Use any remaining time to talk about how you got here: what you studied, that there's no single "right" path, and that you don't have to come from a legal family.

Visiting Olympia? If the class is touring the Capitol, tie the wrap-up to what they'll see — the promises in action at the Legislature, the Governor's office, and the Supreme Court next door.

GRADE NOTES:

- **K-5:** Expect "have you ever met a bad guy?" energy. Roll with it.
- **6-8 and 9-12:** Expect questions about pay, law school, and real cases. Answer honestly and grade-appropriately.

Pro-tip

Let Q&A run the clock. If questions are flowing, stay with them — the career conversation will happen organically. If the room wraps early, the path-to-law talk is your natural closer. Either way, it's always fine to say, "I don't know." That's a good lesson too. And if the conversation gets cut short, let that be your reason to come back — students who've met you once will have twice as many questions.



DO'S

- **You are the lesson.** The single most memorable thing is a real legal professional in the room. You don't have to be perfect.
- **Less content, more connection.** Cutting material is almost always the right call.
- **Let the teacher steer.** It's their classroom and their students. Check in on what works.
- **Be nonpartisan.** How the system works, not your take on any case.
- **Arrive early.** Allow 10–15 min. for check in at the front office.



DON'TS

- **No photos of students without explicit parental permission.** Adults and your "I Took the Pledge!" badge are fine (see the Volunteer Toolkit).
- **Don't over-research.** Pick two core ideas, know your lesson, and trust your experience.
- **Sept. 17 isn't the only day.** If Constitution Day is hard to schedule, any point in the year works.
- **Don't show up empty-handed.** A bar card or courthouse badge gives students something concrete to latch onto. And business casual is the safe call — approachable beats formal.

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CHOOSE

Sample Lessons

Slide presentation

The Constitution Belongs to You! (3-5, WSBA)



[Download PPT](#) 

A plug-and-play deck with speaker notes, goals, talking points, and suggested transition lines so you're not building from scratch. Opens with two relatable scenarios — recess with no rules, a board-game dispute over house rules — that let students discover fairness and the rule of law on their own before you name either one.

Customize before you walk in: your introduction slide and the “What Do I Do?” slide have placeholder fields for your name, title, and a line about your work. Skim the rest of the deck to swap in your own examples where they'd land better, and review the speaker notes ahead of time to pick which discussion questions you'll ask.

[Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People, Equality and fairness, Civic agency.]

Scripted mock trial

State v. Mary Witch (3-5, WA Courts)



[Download PDF](#) 

A fairy-tale trial that the students act out; fully scripted and shows what courts do. The case is also genuinely funny (a witch who insists the cage was “a bed with high sides” tends to bring the room along), which is most of why it's a guaranteed hit with this age group.

While genuinely turnkey: nothing to source, nothing to write — that doesn't mean zero-prep. With up to 14 speaking roles and a 25-minute main event, the best mock-trials are the ones where you loop in the teacher ahead of time to pre-cast parts and let students read their lines once before you arrive. Short on lead time, or working with a class that hasn't prepped? The script is built to flex — trim the cast, read the judge's and bailiff's lines yourself, and keep the energy up; it still lands.

[Core ideas: The rule of law, Rights and liberties, Equality and fairness.]

Lesson Building Toolkits

Browse by grade level

Lessons, activities, and clips are grouped by what you need them to do. Pick one that fits your grade and lands at least two core Constitutional ideas.

JUMP TO YOUR GRADE BAND:

[ELEMENTARY \(K-5\)](#) | [MIDDLE SCHOOL \(6-8\)](#) | [HIGH SCHOOL \(9-12\)](#)

Elementary (K-5)

How to use this: Pick the format you'd most enjoy running and choose any lesson under it. Not sure? The ★ marks the easiest lesson to run in each format — take it and go. Everything here is built for K-5 and needs nothing beyond standard classroom AV. Each notes the core ideas it teaches — aim to land at least two in your visit. Watch the grade tags — a few options are upper-elementary (4-5) only.

Want a sure thing?

Use the WSBA sample lesson plan: [The Constitution Belongs to You!](#) Built around familiar fairness scenarios, student discussion, and a conversation about you and legal careers. When in doubt, that's your visit — nothing to source or prep.

Read aloud and discuss

The lowest-lift session — the story hooks them in the first half; your job is just to spark the conversation that follows. Keep your intro and wrap-up short so there's time for both the read and the talk. Source the book yourself from a library or bookstore ahead of time.

★ **Books for Read-Aloud and Discussion (K-3).** Bring a short civics-themed picture book, read it aloud, then spark discussion with a few “was that fair?” / “what would you do?” questions tied to a core idea. *Core ideas: varies by book; 2 We the People, 3 Rights and liberties.* (Source: Modeled on the Rendell Center's [Constitution Day Read-Aloud program](#)).

RECOMMENDED TITLES:

- We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States - David Catrow
 - We the People: The Story of Our Constitution - Lynne Cheney
 - A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution - Betsy and Giulio Maestro
 - Saving the Liberty Bell - Megan McDonald
 - Carl the Complainer - Michelle Knudsen
 - NoodlePhant - Jacob Kramer and K-Fai Steele
 - What Can a Citizen Do? - Dave Eggers
-

Talk through a big idea

A guided discussion that makes one founding idea click in kid-friendly terms.

- ★ **Sample Lesson Plan: [The Constitution Belongs to You!](#) (3-5, Washington State Bar Association).** Ready-to-run lesson using familiar fairness scenarios and student discussion, plus a conversation about legal careers, to make the case for why rules and legal protections work the way they do. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People, Equality and fairness, Civic agency.*
 - ★ **[Our School Rules](#) (K-2, PBS LearningMedia).** Students discuss why rules exist, connect their school rules to the Preamble's promise to "establish justice," then collaborate to create a Classroom Constitution — voting on rules the same way the founders did. A simplified Preamble with phrase-by-phrase breakdowns is built into the lesson. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People, Equality and fairness.*
 - **[Our Rights & Responsibilities](#) (K-3, PBS LearningMedia).** Single-period discussion connecting the Bill of Rights to real-life examples — students identify a right (e.g., freedom of expression under the First Amendment) and its corresponding responsibility. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Equality and fairness.*
 - **[Fourteenth Amendment – Brown v. The Board of Education Lesson](#) (3-6, American Constitution Society).** Tells the true story of Linda Brown's fight to desegregate her neighborhood school. Presenter note: skip the closing discussion questions about present-day school segregation — focus on "what does equal mean to you?" questions. *Core ideas: Equality and fairness, The rule of law.* [Note: Page opens with ACS's advocacy mission — this is not part of the lesson.]
 - **[Understanding Procedural Justice](#) (4-7, WA Courts).** Why a fair process matters as much as the verdict — connects directly to how students experience fairness in their own lives. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*
 - **[Rights and Responsibilities](#) (4-6, WA Courts).** What we owe one another, and why fair rules matter — a discussion that connects directly to students' daily lives. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People.*
 - **[An Introduction to the Bill of Rights](#) (4-8, WA Courts).** Story-driven — you share real examples of rights in action and ask students what life would be like without them. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Civic agency.*
-

Run a mock trial

Students take the courtroom roles; you're the judge. Putting a fairy-tale villain on trial turns the whole room into the courtroom, and they love it.

★ **Sample Lesson Plan: [State v. Mary Witch — Scripted Mock Trial](#) (3-5, WA Courts).** A fairy-tale trial students act out; fully scripted, almost no prep, and it shows what courts do. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Rights and liberties, Equality and fairness.*

[State v. Shenzi, Banzai and Ed — scripted mock trial](#) (3-5, WA Courts). A "Lion King"-themed courtroom drama: the hyena trio stands trial for their role in Mufasa's death, with 15 speaking roles carrying the case from opening statement to verdict. Presenter note: heavier stakes than Mary Witch's fairy-tale plot, and the full script runs a 50-minute period — probably a better fit

for a return visit, once the teacher knows you and can help assign parts ahead of time. Core ideas: The rule of law, Rights and liberties.

Solve a problem or build something

Hands-on reasoning and invention.

Rules, Rules, Rules Lesson (K-5, American Bar Association). “Pass the Eraser” game makes students feel, firsthand, why clear and consistent rules matter — before you ever say the words “rule of law.” Rules change without warning as the eraser gets passed around, then students rebuild and vote on their own version. Keep the discussion concrete: “What happened when the rules kept changing? Was that fun or fair?” Try the rulebook metaphor — recess with no rules isn’t fun for anyone. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People.*

Video clips to breakup your lesson

A quick drop-in to help anchor the discussion — not a full activity on its own. Match the clip to your grade.

- **PBS KIDS – Together We Can: What Is the U.S. Constitution? (K-2)**. A gentle, animated intro to the Constitution as a set of rules we make together — pitched right at the youngest rooms. *Core ideas: We the People, The rule of law.*
 - **Quizlet – U.S. Constitution Explained for Students (3-5)**. In under 5 minutes, this video breaks down what the Constitution is, why it was created, what it includes, and how it works today — a strong overview to open any visit. *Core ideas: We the People, The rule of law.*
 - **TED-Ed – A 3-Minute Guide to the Bill of Rights (3-5)**. A fast, clear run through the first ten amendments — a strong setup before a rights discussion or mock trial. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Checks and balances.*
 - **Facts of Congress: The Bill of Rights (1-minute video) (4-6)**. A one-minute, student-friendly clip to open or close the visit. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Checks and balances.*
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Middle School (6–8)

How to use this: Pick the format you'd most enjoy running and choose any lesson under it. Not sure? The ★ marks the easiest lesson to run in each format — take it and go. Everything here is built for 6–8 and needs nothing beyond standard classroom AV. Each notes the core ideas it teaches — aim to land at least two in your visit. *Watch the grade tags — a few options are upper middle school (grade 8) only.*

Story-driven discussion

Dig into a case or a right they feel.

★ **Rights and Responsibilities (4–6, WA Courts)**. What we owe one another, and why fair rules matter — students act as judge on a real historical case (blindness from a firecracker, an infected kick, a baseball injury) and reach their own verdict before hearing the real one. Presenter note: for a shorter visit, assign one case to the whole class rather than running all three. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People.*

An Introduction to the Bill of Rights (4–8, WA Courts). Story-driven — share real First or Fourth Amendment cases and ask students what life would be like without that right. Presenter note: before your visit, confirm whether the teacher has already covered the Bill of Rights. Bring 2–3 case stories ready to tell and check which handout the teacher wants used (included with the lesson PDF). If they haven't covered the Bill of Rights yet — focus on the First and Fourth Amendments and introduce them yourself. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Civic agency.*

Fourteenth Amendment – Brown v. The Board of Education Lesson (3–6, American Constitution Society). Tells the true story of Linda Brown's fight to desegregate her neighborhood school. Presenter note: skip the closing discussion questions about present-day school segregation. Focus: on “what does equal mean to you?” questions. *Core ideas: Equality and fairness, The rule of law.* [Note: Page opens with ACS's advocacy mission — this is not part of the lesson.]

Talk through a big idea

Students pick a side and make the case.

★ **First Amendment — Freedom of Speech (Tinker v. Des Moines) (6–8, American Constitution Society)**. The armband-protest case that defined student speech rights, plus a class debate exercise where students argue whether pajamas, a petition, and a protest song count as protected speech. Use the “First Amendment Quiz” as a quick oral warm-up instead of printing it. Skip: VerifyIt trivia icebreaker. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*

• **Understanding Procedural Justice (4–7, WA Courts)**. Why a fair process matters as much as the verdict — connects directly to how students experience fairness in their own lives. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

Understanding Procedural Justice (4-7, WA Courts). Why a fair process matters as much as the verdict — connects directly to how students experience fairness in their own lives. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

Drug Testing in Schools: Take a Stand (8-12, WA Courts). Students physically take a position on a school-relevant issue and defend their position. Read the case-law section before your visit — it covers five real cases and a subtle state-vs-federal distinction worth getting right. Presenter note: for a shorter visit, focus on Washington’s own case (*York v. Wahkiakum*) rather than covering all five. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*

Run a mock trial

Students take the courtroom roles; you’re the judge.

★ **Theft Scripted Mock Trial (6-12, WA Courts).** Full criminal case, prosecution vs. defense, argued start to finish. The legal teams are split into six small roles apiece, so with 18 speaking parts in play, no one student is stuck carrying a big block of lines. It’s written for the whole 50-minute period, though: plan to trim testimony or tighten the closings to fit inside the ~20-minute activity window. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

The Fourth Amendment Goes to the Mall (6-8, American Constitution Society). A courtroom argument, not a script: split the class into prosecutors, defense, and judges arguing whether a mall security guard violated a suspect’s Fourth Amendment rights. You’ll need to teach “state action,” “search,” and “reasonable expectation of privacy” before the arguments have anything to stand on, using the Fundamentals section earlier in the packet. Read six real-case squibs ahead of time to help students argue. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*

Play a game

Fast and competitive; good energy in the room.

Rules, Rules, Rules Lesson (6-8, American Bar Association). “Pass the Eraser” game makes students feel, firsthand, why clear and consistent rules matter before you ever say the words “rule of law.” Rules change without warning, then students rebuild and vote in their own. Discuss after: Why do families, schools, and communities need rules? Who steps in when people disagree about what a rule means or whether it’s being followed fairly? *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People.*

Solve a problem or build something

Hands-on reasoning and invention.

★ **Conflict Resolution (6-12, WA Courts).** Students work through a real dispute via video and paired negotiation, then map it onto the four ways conflicts get resolved — negotiation, mediation, arbitration, litigation. Will need the teacher’s help mid-activity to distribute alternating viewpoint handouts and pair students, plus a cued-up video ahead of time. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

The Courts: Interpreting the Law on Weapons (5-12, WA Courts). A short judicial-reasoning exercise — students apply a written law to messy real-world facts and see why interpretation is the court’s job. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*

No Vehicles in the Park (5-12, WA Courts). The classic “what does the rule actually mean?” puzzle — students wrestle with an ambiguous law the way a court does. Assumes students already have a basic grounding in how laws are made and interpreted — confirm with the teacher beforehand. For a first-time, shorter visit, pick 4-5 (out of 8) scenarios rather than rushing through all of them. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*

Video clips to breakup your lesson

A quick drop-in to help anchor the discussion. Match the clip to your grade.

- **Teach with TVW clip (6-12):** Anchor to a discussion and connect it to your own job. (5-7 min)
 - **Facts of Congress – The Bill of Rights (4-6).**
 - **WA TVW – Civics 101: What is the Law? (6-12).**
 - **TED-Ed – Why wasn’t the Bill of Rights originally in the US Constitution? (6-12).**
 - **C-SPAN – Constitution Clips (6-12).**
 - **iCivics/Center for Civic Education – Constitution EXPLAINED, 35 short videos (6-12).**
 - **PBS – The Constitution’s origins: “The Big Bang Theory” (6-12).** Constitutional scholar makes the case for the founding as the pivotal moment in American history — a good scene-setter before diving into rights or structure. (4 min)
 - **PBS – Philadelphia and the Constitutional Convention (6-12).** Historian walks through the practical, thorny problems the framers had to solve to get 13 states to agree on anything — useful before an activity on compromise, federalism, or how the branches were designed to check each other. (6 min)
 - **National Constitution Center – Constitution 101 (9-12).** In partnership with Khan Academy, this complement to the teacher-led version, offers students short videos that span nine engaging units that delve into constitutional concepts.
 - **National Constitution Center – Creating the Constitution (all ages).** Describes the Constitutional Convention — 55 delegates, 3½ months of compromise, landing on three branches and checks and balances. Notes the document’s imperfections and how “We the People” has been tested ever since.
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Going deeper – national supplements

Not for a single visit — pull one targeted piece or use these to brush up before you go.

- **National Archives – Teaching Six Big Ideas in the Constitution (8-12)** – Five-step unit; best standalone lesson is Step 5, six balanced two-sided debates on limited government, federalism, checks and balances.
 - **Annenberg Classroom – Teaching the Constitution (9-12)** – Use this guide to find videos, lesson plans and games that connect to the articles and amendments in the Constitution.
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High School (9-12)

How to use this: Pick the format you'd most enjoy running and choose any lesson under it. Not sure? The ★ marks the easiest lesson to run in each format — take it and go. Everything here is built for 9-12 and needs nothing beyond standard classroom AV. Each notes the core ideas it teaches — aim to land at least two in your visit.

Story-driven discussion

Dig into a case or a right they feel.

Fourteenth Amendment – *Brown v. The Board of Education* Lesson (7-12), American

Constitution Society. Linda Brown's real fight to desegregate her neighborhood school, carried by her story rather than case-law argument — the entry point is "what does equal mean to you?" Presenter note: skip the Veriflyt trivia icebreaker and the closing questions on present-day school segregation; stay with the personal thread. Reference the [Elementary School version](#) for basics and additional discussion questions. *Core ideas: Equality and fairness, The rule of law.* [Note: Page opens with ACS's advocacy mission — this is not part of the lesson.]

Talk through a big idea

Students pick a side and make the case.

- ★ **First Amendment — Freedom of Speech Lesson (9-12, American Constitution Society).** Teaches *Tinker v. Des Moines* — a case establishing that student speech is protected unless it causes a "substantial disruption" — then tests that standard against later cases. Run *Tinker* plus the class debate only, using the First Amendment Quiz as an oral warm-up instead of printing it. Focus on: *Morse v. Frederick* ("Bong Hits 4 Jesus") and school dress-code challenge. Presenter note skip: Veriflyt trivia icebreaker and cut the *Hardwick v. Heyward* case summary from what you print or hand out. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*
 - **To Sign or Not to Sign — Federalist/Anti-Federalist debate (9-12, National Constitution Center).** Go to the debate (p. 5), using the real primary sources: John Jay's 1788 address and Elbridge Gerry's dissent letter (Handouts 3-4, p. 9-12). Split the class into two sides and have them argue from the actual founders' words, then debrief on what each side got right. Presenter note skip the read-aloud play entirely. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*
 - **Search and Seizure in Washington, Including in the Schools (9-12, WA Courts).** Fourth Amendment made real: a locker-and-car search case study argued by student "circuit courts," each side ruling and defending its reasoning, grounded in actual Washington case law on student privacy. Presenter note: this is a return-visit pick — save it for once the class has already covered the constitutional basics and the school-search statute on their own, so the case study lands instead of opening cold. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, The rule of law.*
 - **Freedom of Expression in Special Places (9-12, WA Courts).** A real Supreme Court case, school newspaper censorship, argued in student teams: pick a side blind, defend it, then find out how the Court actually ruled. Presenter note: for a return-visit pick — pairs naturally after the First Amendment lesson above. *Core ideas: Rights and liberties, Checks and balances.*
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Run a mock trial

Students take the courtroom roles; you're the judge.

★ **Theft Scripted Mock Trial (6-12, WA Courts)**. Full criminal case, prosecution vs. defense, argued start to finish. The legal teams are split into six small roles apiece, so with 18 speaking parts in play, no one student is stuck carrying a big block of lines. It's written for the whole 50-minute period, though: plan to trim testimony or tighten the closings to fit inside the ~20-minute activity window. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

Tort Liability: Mock Trial (10-12, WA Courts). A real trial team experience, not a cold read: students argue third-party liability in a drunk-driving injury case, drafting their own direct and cross-examination questions from witness statements rather than working from a script. Timed to the minute (openings, direct, cross, closings) so it fits the period once the prep is done. Presenter note: meant for a return-visit only — save it for when the teacher has taught negligence and the students prepared their questions and roles before you arrive. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness.*

Play a game

Fast and competitive; good energy in the room.

Claim Your Jurisdiction (8-12, WA Courts). A fast, competitive game on which court hears which case — makes the structure of the judiciary click in a single period. Presenter note: skip case scenarios #6, #8, and #9 (touch on a named president and a live geopolitical topic); paraphrase the tribal jurisdiction background in your own words rather than reading it verbatim. *Core ideas: Checks and balances, The rule of law.*

Solve a problem or build something

Hands-on reasoning and invention.

★ **Drunk Driving Legislative Session (9-12, WA Courts)**. Students draft their own DUI law in small groups, then compare it against Washington's actual statute — a hands-on look at how a policy question becomes a law. *Core ideas: The rule of law, We the People.*

No Vehicles in the Park (5-12, WA Courts). The classic “what does the rule actually mean?” puzzle — students wrestle with an ambiguous law the way a court does. Assumes students already have a basic grounding in how laws are made and interpreted — confirm with the teacher beforehand. For a first-time, shorter visit, pick 4-5 (out of 8) scenarios rather than rushing through all of them. *Core ideas: The rule of law, Checks and balances.*

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Video clips to breakup your lesson

A quick drop-in to help anchor the discussion — not a full activity on its own. Match the clip to your grade.

- [Teach with TVW clip \(6-12\)](#): Anchor to a discussion and connect it to your own job. (5-7 min)
- [WA TVW – Civics 101: What is the Law? \(6-12\)](#)
- [TED-Ed – Why wasn't the Bill of Rights originally in the US Constitution? \(6-12\)](#)
- [C-SPAN – Constitution Clips \(6-12\)](#)
- [iCivics/Center for Civic Education – Constitution EXPLAINED, 35 short videos \(6-12\)](#)
- [PBS – The Constitution's origins: "The Big Bang Theory" \(6-12\)](#). Constitutional scholar makes the case for the founding as the pivotal moment in American history — a good scene-setter before diving into rights or structure. (4 min)
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Going deeper — national supplements

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Curriculum Library

Browse by type and content

This is the library — everything compiled below, across grade levels and lesson categories, ready to pull from one place. Use it two ways: browse by format if you know how you want to run your visit (a mock trial, a discussion, a read-aloud), or skim for a single video, activity, or discussion question to drop into a lesson you're already building. Nothing here requires you to start from scratch — grab what fits your grade band and visit, and go.

The Washington Courts lesson library is built and maintained by the Administrative Office of the Courts for legal professional volunteers — a strong choice for turnkey, ready-to-run material. A few Washington-specific picks (like the Teach with TVW videos) are woven in to connect that foundation to how it plays out locally. For the Constitution itself — the core ideas, the history, the text — the national resources listed below anchor your lesson.

Washington-specific and court-procedure lessons

BROWSE BY GRADE BAND AND TOPICS.

- **Washington Courts (all grade levels):** <https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lawyers>
 - **Teach with TVW – Judicial Branch EXPLAINED + Rule of Law and State Courts (6-12):** multi-period Rule of Law lesson plan with teacher guide and student notebook included. <https://teachwithtvw.org/unit/the-rule-of-law-and-state-courts/>
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To teach what the Constitution is

BEST FOR THE FRAMING AND THE CORE IDEAS THEMSELVES.

- **PBS LearningMedia — Our Rights & Responsibilities (K-5):** stand-alone lesson connects the Bill of Rights to real-life examples — students identify a right (e.g., freedom of expression) alongside its corresponding responsibility. Part of a 10-lesson civics collection. <https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/our-rights-responsibilities-lesson-plan/civics-for-kids-building-tomorrow-together/>
- **We the People: Rewrite the Preamble — Elementary Edition (3-5):** <https://docsteach.org/lesson/we-the-people-elementary-edition/>
- **National Constitution Center – To Sign or Not to Sign (all grades):** quick 5-10 minute activity opener (p. 4) as students walk in. Invite them to sign or skip a fake decree posted in the room (“schools close every year for Constitution Day”), then ask why they did or didn’t. Ties straight to Article VII. It’s a hook for your presentation, skip it if you’re short on time. (See video clip, [here](#) – link in PDF inactive) https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/To_Sign_or_Not_To_Sign.pdf
- **Annenberg Constitution guide — “What It Says, What It Means” (6-12):** <https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/constitution/>

- **iCivics – Constitution Day Lesson Plan (6-8):** <https://ed.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/constitution-day-lesson-plan>
- **PBS LearningMedia – Explore the U.S. Constitution, interactive lesson (6-12)** — a guided close reading of the Constitution that begins with the Constitutional Convention; interactive and screen-based, free with guest access. Its companion “Constitution EXPLAINED” short videos also make great drop-in clips. <https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/civ23-soc-exploreconstitution/explore-the-us-constitution-interactive-lesson/>

Books for read-aloud and discussion (K-3)

THE LOWEST-PREP WAY TO SHOW UP; BRING A SHORT CIVICS-THEMED PICTURE BOOK.

Build your agenda around the read and discussion, keeping your intro and wrap-up short so there’s enough time for both. You will need to source the book yourself from a library or bookstore.

(Source: Modeled on the Rendell Center’s [Constitution Day Read-Aloud program](#))

RECOMMENDED TITLES:

- We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States — *David Catrow*
- We the People: The Story of Our Constitution — *Lynne Cheney*
- A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution — *Betsy and Giulio Maestro*
- Saving the Liberty Bell — *Megan McDonald*
- Carl the Complainer — *Michelle Knudsen*
- NoodlePhant — *Jacob Kramer and K-Fai Steele*
- What Can a Citizen Do? — *Dave Egger*

Talking to a large group or assembly

The format changes if you’re invited to speak to more than one class at a time. Skip the interactive format and lead with a structured talk:

- **WA Courts – Outline for Talks to Large Groups or Assemblies (all grades):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=OutlineforTalkstoLargeGroupsAssemblies

Talk through a big idea

STORY DRIVEN DISCUSSION OR PICK A SIDE AND MAKE THE CASE.

- **WSBA Sample Lesson Plan: The Constitution Belongs to You! (3-5):** [https://www.wsba.org/docs/default-source/about-wsba/constitution-day/choose/constitution-day---grades-3-5_final-\(1\).pptx?sfvrsn=c45ce1f1_5](https://www.wsba.org/docs/default-source/about-wsba/constitution-day/choose/constitution-day---grades-3-5_final-(1).pptx?sfvrsn=c45ce1f1_5)
- **PBS LearningMedia – Our School Rules (K-2):** <https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/our-school-rules-lesson-plan/civics-for-kids-building-tomorrow-together/>
- **PBS LearningMedia – Our Rights & Responsibilities (K-3):** <https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/our-rights-responsibilities-lesson-plan/civics-for-kids-building-tomorrow-together/>
- **WA Courts – Exploring *U.S. v. Hirabayashi* (4-8):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=USvHirabayashi

- **WA Courts – Rights and Responsibilities (4-6):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=RightsAndResponsibilities
- **WA Courts – An Introduction to the Bill of Rights (4-8):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=IntroToBillOfRights
- **WA Courts – Understanding Procedural Justice (4-7):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=ProceduralJustice
- **American Constitution Society – First Amendment — Freedom of Speech (*Tinker v. Des Moines*) (6-8):** <https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CITC-middle-school-lesson-plan-1A.pdf>
- **WA Courts – Search and Seizure in Washington, Including in the Schools (9-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=SearchAndSeizure
- **WA Courts – *Brown v. Board of Education* (9-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=BrownVBoard
- **WA Courts – Her Day in Court – Women Judges and Justices in Washington State (9-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=HerDayInCourt-WomenJudgesAndJusticesInWashingtonState
- **WA Courts – Freedom of Expression in Special Places (9-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=FreedomOfExpressionInSpecialPlaces
- **American Constitution Society – First Amendment, Freedom of Speech Lesson (9-12):** <https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/High-School-Lesson-Plan-on-Freedom-of-Speech.pdf>
- **American Constitution Society – Fourteenth Amendment, *Brown v. Board of Education* Lesson (7-12).** Reference the [Elementary School version](#) for basics and additional discussion questions: <https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CITC-Middle-High-School-LessonPlan-14thAmend.pdf>

Solve a problem or build something

HANDS-ON REASONING AND INVENTION.

- **WA Courts – Conflict Resolution (4-8):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=ConflictResolution
- **WA Courts – No Vehicles in the Park (5-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=NoVehicles
- **WA Courts – Creating a Bill of Rights in Space (4-8):** Not intended for first-time visit; designed as the capstone of a multi-lesson unit. Work with the teacher well in advance to lay groundwork. https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=CreatingRightsInSpace
- **WA Courts – The Courts: Interpreting the Law on Weapons (5-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=WeaponsLaw
- **WA Courts – Drunk Driving Legislative Session (9-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=DrunkDrivingLegislation

Ready-to-run mock trials

FULLY SCRIPTED, LOW-PREP, FUN TO RUN.

Expect students to do most of the talking — plan on facilitating and observing more than lecturing. Limit your intro and wrap-up so the activity itself isn't cut short.

- **WA Courts – *State v. Mary Witch* scripted mock trial (3-5):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=HanselAndGretelMockTrial
 - **WA Courts – *State v. Shenzi, Banzai and Ed* scripted mock trial (3-5):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=LionKingMockTrial
 - **WA Courts – No Vehicles in the Park — statutory interpretation (5-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=NoVehicles
 - **WA Courts – Theft Scripted Mock Trial (6-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=TheftScriptedMockTrial
 - **American Bar Association – Battle for Truth: It's Your Witness (6-10):** https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/lesson-plans/middle-school/du-process/battle-for-truth/
 - **American Constitution Society – The Fourth Amendment Goes to the Mall (6-8):** <https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACS-CITC-lesson-plan-4th-Amendment-Middle-School-1.pdf>
 - **WA Courts – Tort Liability: Mock Trial (10-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=TortLiabilityMockTrial
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Short videos to drop in

TWO- TO FIVE-MINUTE CLIPS TO OPEN, BREAK UP, OR CLOSE A LESSON.

- **PBS KIDS – Together We Can: What is the U.S. Constitution? (K-2):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdggncqQIKY>
- **Quizlet – U.S. Constitution Explained for Students | Quick & Easy Summary (3-5):** https://youtu.be/9C3xhHN_LQ4?si=h86f7PRkfMiXnaPZ
- **TED-Ed – 3-Minute Guide to the Bill of Rights (3-5):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYEFm5dLMQ>
- **National Constitution Center – Creating the Constitution (all ages):** <https://www.teachertube.com/videos/creating-the-constitution-5604>
- **Facts of Congress – The Bill of Rights (4-6):** <https://youtu.be/R86AqllMmrU>
- **WA TVW – Civics 101: What is the Law? (6-12):** <https://teachwithtwv.org/video/2-what-is-the-law/>
- **TED-Ed – Why wasn't the Bill of Rights originally in the US Constitution? (6-12):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMCDikASE4o>
- **C-SPAN – Constitution Clips (6-12):** <https://www.c-span.org/classroom/constitutionClips/>
- **iCivics/Center for Civic Education – Constitution EXPLAINED, 35 short videos (6-12):** <https://ed.icivics.org/constitution-explained-video-series>
- **PBS – Peter Sagal on the Constitution's origins: "The Big Bang Theory" (6-12):** <https://www.pbs.org/video/constitution-usa-peter-sagal-big-bang-theory/>

- **PBS – Philadelphia and the Constitutional Convention (6-12):** <https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/constitution-usa-peter-sagal/clip/constitution-usa-peter-sagal-philadelphia-and-constitutional-convention>
- **U.S. Courts Shorts: An Impartial Federal Judiciary (9-12):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlOllm4-wnE>
- **PBS – Civics Made Easy: Are Constitutional Amendments No Longer Possible? (9-12):** consider showing an excerpt rather than full ~15 min clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iR1ZvKqbNLU>

KEEP IT LOCAL WITH TVW VIDEOS

Teach with TVW — Washington Courts EXPLAINED (6-12). Washington-specific court-system videos, each with its own reason to show it: career conversation, checks-and-balances-in-action, or direct relevance to students themselves.

- **Civil vs. Criminal Cases:** <https://youtu.be/gy5xfjWWKzU>
- **Prosecutor vs. Public Defender:** <https://youtu.be/CzBE2PJYZak>
- **Juvenile Court:** <https://youtu.be/qjA4EZ3BcD0>
- **Superior Court:** <https://youtu.be/CJku-z6RRgs>

Go deeper: full collections and self-prep

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM SETS: PULL ONE TO USE OR TO BRUSH UP.

- **Bill of Rights Institute — Development of the Constitution (3-5):** Multi-stage elementary unit on the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the civic virtue of justice, with a full lesson plan, slide deck, and seven student handouts. Comprehensive rather than single-visit — best for pulling one activity or the “Fair or Unfair” warm-up game as a quick opener. <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/lessons/development-of-the-constitution/>
- **WA TVW — Judicial Branch Explained: Unconstitutional? (6-12):** Provides full teacher guide, slide deck, and discussion questions on judicial review — what happens when a law is struck down — built around a single short video as the launch point. The fastest way to brush up before a visit if you want a ready-to-run package. <https://teachwithtvw.org/video/what-happens-if-a-law-is-declared-unconstitutional-questions-to-the-court/>
- **Annenberg Classroom — Teaching the Constitution (6-12):** A guide organized by article and amendment, with videos, lessons, games, and timelines. Best for grabbing one targeted clip or lesson on a topic — Article III set on judicial independence is especially strong. <https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/teaching-the-constitution/>
- **National Constitution Center — Constitution 101:** Developed with The Khan Academy, a free, self-paced course built to help you think like a constitutional lawyer. Best used to brush up your own footing before a visit, or as an extension for advanced high schoolers. <https://constitutioncenter.org/education/constitution-101-curriculum/constitution-101-with-khan-academy>

Interactive games

Some of these games (*) won't fit inside a single visit, but they're worth handing off. Share the links with the teacher so students can play later at home or during class free time.

- **American Bar Association – Pass the Eraser (K-8):** https://www.americanbar.org/content/aba-cms-dotorg/en/groups/public_education/resources/lesson-plans/middle-school/constitution/rules--rules--rules/
 - **WA Courts – Claim Your Jurisdiction (8-12):** https://www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.dspPlan&plan=ClaimYourJurisdiction-1Day
 - (*) **iCivics – Argument Wars (6-12):** <https://ed.icivics.org/games/argument-wars>
 - (*) **iCivics – Do I Have a Right? (6-12):** <https://www.icivics.org/games/do-i-have-right>
 - (*) **iCivics – Race to Ratify (6-12):** <https://www.icivics.org/games/race-to-ratify>
 - (*) **Annenberg Classroom – That's Your Right, Bill of Rights card game (6-12):** <https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/resource/annenberg-classrooms-thats-right/>
 - (*) **Mount Vernon – Be Washington (6-12):** <https://www.mountvernon.org/site/bewashington/>
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Additional Resources

Slide Presentation Template

Branded slide deck formatted for you to shape your own lesson.

[[Download PPT](#) ]

Simplified Bill of Rights

PLAIN-LANGUAGE VERSION OF ALL TEN AMENDMENTS AVAILABLE.

[WA Courts large-group outline](#). An easy way to fill discussion time: Read two or three amendments aloud and ask the room, “*What would change if we didn’t have this one?*” That single question does more than any lecture. Strong picks to engage students:

- **First amendment:** Speech, religion, the press, gathering peacefully. Ask what they’d want to be free to say.
- **Fourth amendment:** No searches without a good reason. Kids feel this one instantly via backpacks and phones.
- **Sixth amendment:** A fair, speedy trial and a lawyer. This is where you come in.
- **Eighth amendment:** Punishment must fit the crime. Good for a fairness debate older elementary kids love.

Constitution Day Talking Points

Quick reference with key themes organized by grade band (elementary, middle school, and high school) with corresponding messages and legal examples on the page.

Printable Presenter “Cheat Sheet”

Will help keep you on track with the agenda, core ideas, takeaways, and discussion questions.

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Constitution Day Talking Points

These are conversation starters, not a script — and they're not the only way in. Pick two or three that fit your lesson and your room, then make them your own. Swap in a case you've worked, an example from your practice area, or an honest answer to a question you get asked all the time. The points below are a springboard. Your experience is the real material.

ELEMENTARY (K-5)

“What is the Constitution, and who is it for?”

FOCUS: THE PREAMBLE, COLLECTIVE RULES, AND FOUNDATIONAL FAIRNESS.

- **The Rules of the Game:** Think about what would happen at recess if there were no rules at all. Who would get hurt? Who would get left out? The Constitution is that same idea — but for our whole country. A set of rules we all agreed to so everyone gets treated fairly.
- **The Ultimate Group Contract:** The Constitution is a set of promises our country made to everyone who lives here — about fairness, rights, and being treated equally. Think of it as the ultimate group agreement: we all agreed to play by these rules together. (*Pairs with We the People: rewrite the Preamble — Elementary Edition, 3-5.*)
- **“We the People” Means Them:** The very first words of the Constitution are “We the People.” Not “We the Leaders.” Not “We the Lawyers.” That means this document belongs to you, your family, your classmates — everyone in this room.
- **What a Lawyer Actually Does:** My job in the legal field is to make sure those promises of fairness stay real for everyday people — not just on paper, but in real life. That's what I do. And that's why I'm standing here today.
- **The Next 250 Years:** Our country is still being built. It's 250 years old this year, and there's still work to do. The next 250 years? That's yours.

Think about something in your school, your neighborhood, your world that doesn't feel fair. Now imagine you had the tools to fix it — you get to decide. The Constitution is those tools. Learning how it works is how you pick them up.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8)

“What does the text say, and what does it mean to me?”

FOCUS: CLOSE READING, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND IMMEDIATE PERSONAL RIGHTS.

- **Rights on the Front Lines:** You already have constitutional rights — at school, with police, and online. Not someday when you're 18. Right now. Let's look at what the text actually says about your daily life. (*Pairs with the Annenberg Guide: “What It Says, What It Means.”*)

- **Words Matter in Law:** In law, a single word can change everything. How we interpret a sentence written in 1787 affects what you can post online, who can search your phone, and what you can say at school right now. *(Pairs with PBS “Constitution EXPLAINED” short video clips.)*
- **The Room Where It Happened:** The Constitution wasn’t delivered fully formed — it was argued over, crossed out, and rewritten by flawed, disagreeing people in a hot room in Philadelphia who couldn’t agree on much. Sound familiar? *(Pairs with PBS LearningMedia “Explore the U.S. Constitution.”)*
- **Accountability as a Shield:** What happens when someone breaks a rule and nobody does anything about it? The Constitution was designed specifically so that can’t happen — so no single person, no single leader, ever gets to run the whole show alone.
- **The Living Experiment:** The Constitution is an ongoing argument — and your job as future citizens is to jump in. Read it, question it, apply it to the world you see today.

HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)

“Democracy and why the rule of law belongs to everyone.”

FOCUS: DEEP STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, LEGAL INTERPRETATION, & THE JUDICIAL BRANCH.

- **Constitutional Evolution:** This document was written for 4 million people in 13 colonies. It now governs 330 million people across 50 states, the internet, and things the founders couldn’t have imagined. How does that even work? That’s what we’re here to figure out. *(Pairs with the National Constitution Center’s Constitution 101.)*
- **The Mechanics of Interpretation:** Two judges can read the exact same sentence in the Constitution and come to completely opposite conclusions — and both can make a compelling argument. That’s not a bug in the system. That’s the whole point. *(Pairs with WA TVW’s Judicial Branch Explained: Unconstitutional?)*
- **The Independent Judiciary:** What actually stops someone in power from just doing whatever they want? Courts. An independent judiciary is the mechanism that keeps raw political power in check — and history shows that when it’s weakened, democracies don’t stay healthy for long. *(Pairs with the Annenberg Guide’s articles on Article III.)*
- **The Adversarial System’s Purpose:** In a courtroom, we put two opposing arguments against each other on purpose. Not because we like to fight — because the best way to find the truth is to stress-test every side of it.
- **The Rule of Law Belongs to You:** This system doesn’t run on autopilot. It needs people who understand it, who participate in it, and who are willing to hold it accountable. That’s not a civics-class abstraction. That’s you, sooner than you think.

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Presenter Cheat Sheet

AGENDA

- > **Welcome & who you are** (~3 min)
- > **Why this year, why the Constitution** (~5 min)
- > **Key takeaways for students** (~5 min)
- > **The main event – activity/discussion** (~20 min)
- > **Wrap-up, Q&A, career conversation** (~17 min)

Running short? Shorten the introductory framing or fold the career discussion directly into the Q&A.

Read-aloud (K-3)? Keep your intro and wrap-up short — protect time for reading (10-12 min) and discussion.

GO-TO LINES

- “The Constitution is a set of promises our country made to everyone who lives here.”
- “The next 250 years are yours to lead.”
- “The law isn’t just for lawyers — it belongs to everyone in this room.”
- “We’re a work in progress. That’s not a flaw — it’s an invitation.”

THE CORE IDEAS

Hit at least 2 concepts:

- **The rule of law.** No one is above the law — not even the government. Same rules for everyone.
- **We the People.** Government’s power comes from the people. Students have a voice.
- **Rights and liberties.** The Constitution protects freedoms for everyone who lives here.
- **Equality and fairness.** Everyone is treated equally — a promise the country is still working to keep.
- **Checks and balances.** Power is divided so no one part can take over; courts decide independently.
- **Civic agency.** The Constitution can be changed. Every generation shapes it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Elementary (K-5): “What would recess be like with absolutely no rules? Who would it be hardest for?”

Middle School (6-8): “What constitutional rights do you actually think you have here at school or online?” “Why do you think the Constitution splits power across three branches instead of trusting it all to one leader?”

High School (9-12): “If you could draft and pass the 28th Amendment today, what would it be and why?” “Two judges can read the exact same sentence in the Constitution and reach opposite conclusions. Is that a flaw in the system — or is that the whole point?”

After the activity (All Grades): “Was that outcome fair? What would you have argued or done differently?” “What’s one thing you’d make fairer?”

PICK 2-3 KEY FACTS

- The Constitution starts with ‘We the People’ — not ‘We the government.’ That’s intentional.
- The Bill of Rights doesn’t give you rights — it protects rights you already have.
- Three branches, one purpose — so no president, court, or Congress can run the whole show alone.
- The Constitution has been amended 27 times. That means it was never meant to be a final answer. You’re the ones to improve it next.
- The Preamble lists six goals for this country. We’re still working on all of them — it’s your turn to push those promises closer to reality. Speak up, vote and hold your leaders accountable.

Tips: Write your takeaways on the board. Students should leave the room holding onto these.

CONTACTS & LINKS

Offer your contact info

[Your name, email]

QUESTIONS? lawyersintheclassroom@courts.wa.gov

ONLINE > www.courts.wa.gov/education/lawyers | www.wsba.org/classroom-ambassadors

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FOLLOW-UP

Share Your Experience

Your visit doesn't have to end when you walk out of the classroom — a quick post or a note to the teacher carries the moment forward, for you, for them, and for the program.

- **Say thank you.** Let the school and teacher know how the visit felt from your side and mention you'd welcome the chance to come back — for Constitution Day next year, or any point in between. A short thank-you note or email to the teacher goes a long way, and it's your chance to keep the door open. Today's visit is often the start of an ongoing relationship, not a one-time stop.
- **Post about your visit.** Before posting any photos or content from the classroom, make sure you have the teacher's permission — student photos need explicit parental consent, but photos of you and other adults are fair game.
- **Be sure to tag @WSBA** on social media and use the following hashtags so we can find your post: #WSBA #ConstitutionDay #LawyersInTheClassroom #RuleOfLawAmbassador #YourDemocracyYourFuture #WashingtonLawyers #CivicsEducation.

Program Support & Feedback

The Lawyers in the Classroom program team is here to help before, during, and after your visit — don't hesitate to reach out at any stage.

- **Report your visit.** Once you've completed your classroom visit, don't forget to drop us a quick note. It helps us track reach statewide and ensures schools are connected with legal professionals in their community for future visits. Send an email to lawyersintheclassroom@courts.wa.gov with your school name, grade, and date of your visit, as well as observations or feedback you'd like to share.
- **Get help.** Questions about a lesson or anything else visit-related? The program team can help you troubleshoot and find a path forward, contact us: lawyersintheclassroom@courts.wa.gov.
- **Share your feedback.** Tell us what worked, what was missing, and what you wish you'd had going in. Your experience helps us improve the program for every volunteer who comes after you. Help us measure program impact and keep the right connections in place for future visits.

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Thank you for participating!



SCAN TO LEARN MORE

www.wsba.org/classroom-ambassadors

