

Let's Talk with the Judge! Comparison of State and Federal Courts
50-minute Program for Distance Learning

Program summary: Students meet a federal judge who has also served as a North Carolina state judge. Students and the judge discuss the differences between the federal and state court systems.

Program goals:

1. Develop an understanding of the differences between state and federal courts, including selection of judges, length of judges' terms, types of cases heard, geographic areas covered, and environments of each court system.
2. Practice oral communication skills.
3. Meet and learn from a federal judge.

| Time | Activity |
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| 10 mins. | <p>Welcome!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief introduction from judge (name, title, location of your courthouse, and the topic of today's program) • Brief introduction from student ambassador (selected student introduces him/herself and teacher, class, school, grade, and location of school) • Judge encourages student participation during the program and explains ways to alert the judge of desired participation: raise hand, raise virtual hand in Zoom, (possibly write comment/question in chat box which is locked to prevent private chats but allows entire group chat). • Let's practice! Judge asks students to raise a hand if they would respond yes to a question (questions can include: who tends to help friends or family resolve a fight?, who likes to write?, who enjoys reading?, who is a good listener? . . . characteristics of a judge) |
| 35 mins. | <p>Selection for "the bench"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State (in North Carolina specifically): election • Describe what type of court you served on, campaigning, partisan v. non-partisan, public's understanding of a judge's job & candidates' qualifications, etc. • Open the floor for discussion about the pros and cons of electing state judges • Federal: presidential nomination, Senate confirmation • Describe this process • Open the floor for discussion about the pros and cons of presidential appointment |
| | Length of "term" on "the bench" |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State: terms for District, Superior, Court of Appeals, and Supreme Court • Federal: term for all Article III judges • Open the floor for discussion about the pros and cons of each <p>Types of Cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Jurisdiction" – what is it? General (state) v. Limited (federal) • State: types of "civil" cases; types of criminal cases • Federal: types of "civil" cases; types of criminal cases • # of Cases and Jury Trials • Open the floor for discussion about the fact that someone can be charged in both state and federal court for the same criminal conduct, etc. <p>Environment/Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the courtroom like when – jury trial v. bench trial, punishment by fines v. imprisonment, high volume v. fewer cases on the day's calendar |
| 5 mins | <p>Wrap Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any questions or comments? |