

KIDS' COURT

S.J. Quinney College of Law
University of Utah



FOUNDATIONS UNIT

Lesson 1. Rules: The Importance of Rules in Our Country and in Our Classroom

Teacher Materials

Paperclips

“Paperclip Discussion Points”

Student Materials

“Rule Analysis” sheet

“What Went Wrong” worksheet

OBJECTIVES

Students will understand the importance of rules, and the role the rules of the country (the Constitution) plays in their lives. Through the creation of the classroom constitution, students will understand the process of creating and passing laws.

Introduction

This is the first lesson in the Kids’ Court curriculum, instead of jumping right in to heavy materials, start off with a couple of name games, and begin to get to know your students (scroll for suggested games). After the games, ease into the lesson plan; this lesson plan is really pretty simple and it is made for law students to ease into their new roles as teachers, just as much as it is made for the children to familiarize themselves with their new afterschool activity. All you really need to know for this lesson is that rules are extremely important, and that they govern most of our interactions throughout each day. You should also try to remember to breathe if this is your first time teaching!

Adaptation

This activity is the kickoff to the Kid's Court program, so it mostly keeps students together as one big group. However, depending on your students that may be very difficult. Any parts of the paperclip game and rule analysis portion of this activity work really well in smaller groups.

This activity also involves a lot of sitting still. If the students get antsy, the "What Went Wrong" worksheet can easily be turned into a physical activity. Have the students try to act out a couple of nearly impossible physical tasks because you want to ensure that they are healthy during Kid's Court.

Activity: 1.5 – 2 hours

Start by playing the paperclip game with students. To play this game place a pile of paperclips in front of a group of students and tell them you thought they might want to play the "Paperclip Game". Even if students are confused, continue to encourage them to play the game; after about five minutes, break out into a discussion posing questions from "*Paperclip Game Discussion Points*".

After discussing the paperclip game, ask the students for examples of rules (encourage or guide them by pointing out specific places that have rules i.e. school, home, the playground). Write two or three of these on the board. Have the students analyze each of the rules written on the board based on the questions on the "*Rule Analysis*" sheet.

Next, explain to the students that an important aspect of rules is the need for clear and concise rules tailored to a specific goal. To illustrate this aspect of rules have the children complete the "*What Went Wrong?*" worksheet.

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARD:

5TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 3.1.D & 3.2.C

Standard 3: Students will understand the rights and responsibilities guaranteed in the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Objective 1: Assess the underlying principles of the US Constitution.

d. Explain the process of passing a law.

Objective 2: Assess how the US Constitution has been amended and interpreted over time, and the impact these amendments have had on the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States.

c. Analyze the impact of the Constitution on their lives today (e.g. freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition).

Adaptation

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This activity also involves a lot of sitting still. If the students get antsy, the "What Went Wrong" worksheet can easily be turned into a physical activity. Have the students try to act out a couple of nearly impossible physical tasks because you want to ensure that they are healthy during Kids' Court, then discuss what went wrong with the physical fitness laws you made to keep Kids' Court students healthy.

Closure

Now that the students have a deeper understanding of the importance of rules, and the importance of making them carefully, begin to create a set of classroom rules. For this portion of the rules activity, explain to the students that they will make the classroom rules similar to the way laws are made by the government. The students will be similar to Congress, they will be able to suggest the rules that they think are important, discuss why each rule should become a part of the classroom rules, and vote on rules before they are finalized. Also, explain that the role of the teacher in this activity is similar to the role of the president in the law making process. The teacher has the final say on whether to authorize the rules in the classroom, and the teacher has the power to veto a rule if necessary. Make sure to write down the classroom rules as they will be used numerous times over the course of Kids' Court.

Rule Analysis

*These are basic questions will can help you to critically think about rules.
You can use this tool evaluate a rule that someone else has made,
or to help you to create rules of your own.*

- a. What rule did the person make?
- b. Who made the rule?
- c. Why did the person think a rule was needed?
- d. Aside from making a rule, what might be some other ways to deal with the problem?
- e. What are some things that might happen because of this rule?
- f. What is wrong with this rule, if anything?
- g. Would you keep this rule as it is, change it, or do away with it? Why?

Paperclip Game Discussion Points

*This group discussion should last about 10 minutes. Below are a set of questions that try to logically draw out the purposes and importance of rules. The class discussion may take off in a different direction, so feel free to expand or skip questions to get to the point based on your students and their discussion.

1. How did you react when you were told to play the paperclip game?
2. What made you react that way?
3. When you normally play a game how do you know what to do?
4. If there are no rules, or no one is following the rules of a particular game you are playing, what happens?
5. Where else are rules important?
6. Knowing what happens without rules, what purposes do you think rules serve?

TEACHER TIP!

After you pose a question, pause to give students time to think. If you answer your own questions right away, the students may think you don't *expect* them to

Brain Break!

Kids seem a bit antsy? Have they been sitting for more than 15-20 minutes? Give their brain, and yours, a break with one of these activities. Afterward, they'll be more focused on the next activity.

Name and Action

Participants gather into a circle. Select a person to start. That person introduces him/herself by saying their name and then doing a simple action. Ex: "Hi, I'm Betsy (does a jumping jack)!" The rest of the participants respond saying "Hi, Betsy!" and mimicking the action. Then the next person should introduce his/herself in the manner. Again the rest of the participants respond by saying hi and repeating the action, but they should also say hi to the first person. The game should continue in this manner, as each participant introduces him/herself the rest of the participants should say hi to that person, and say hi in reverse order to all the other people who have introduced themselves.

Name and Adjective

Participants gather into a circle. Select a person to start. That person introduces him/herself by saying their name preceded by an adjective beginning with the same letter as their name. Ex: "Hi, I'm bubbly Betsy!" The rest of the participants respond saying "Hi, bubbly Betsy!" Then the next person should introduce his/herself in the same manner. Again the rest of the participants respond by saying hi, but they should also say hi to the first person. The game should continue in this manner, as each participant introduces him/herself the rest of the participants should say hi to that person and say hi in reverse order to all the other people who have introduced themselves.

So Do I

The participants sit in a circle, either on the floor or ground facing each other, or in chairs facing OUT ward. If you're using chairs, leave an opening on each end of the circle or oval to allow people to pass through. Use one chair fewer than there are players. One person stands in the middle of the circle and says his or her first name, and something that is true about him or herself. For example, "My name is Molly, and sometimes I eat cold pizza for breakfast." If anyone else in the circle eats cold pizza for breakfast, he/she/they stand up, say "So do I" and run into the circle looking for a new spot. Anyone who stands up must sit down in a spot OTHER THAN their original one. The person left standing is the next person to be in the middle. Play until everyone gets a chance or they get bored of the game.

Name: _____

What Went Wrong?

Directions: Each of the following examples has a description of a problem and a rule that might help deal with the problem. As you read the rules, see if you can find something wrong with each one. Describe the problem with the rule, and you would fix it.

1. Mrs. Abernathy was angry because some students were coming to school late. She made the following rule: "Anyone who is late for school must stay after school two hours every day for a month."
2. Some first-grade students were always getting out of their seats and disturbing those who were working. Mr. Terranova read this rule to his first-grade class: "Ambulatory privileges are henceforth revoked pending further notification."
3. There was not enough room on the playground for everyone to use it at the same time. The principal made this rule: "Boys may use the playing field on Mondays only. Girls may use it the rest of the week."
4. There were many problems in the country. The President made a new law which said: "All people must behave themselves."
5. Some students have been speaking too loudly at lunch time. The following rule was made: "No students may speak during lunch hour."
6. To help students become physically fit, the following rule was made: "During recess, each student is to jump over the school building three times."