



DISCOVERING JUSTICE DISCOVERING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

— CLASSROOM TEACHER INFORMATION —

Discovering the Bill of Rights (DBR) is a ninety-minute, courtroom-based program that provides middle school students with an interactive learning experience in constitutional law. Using recent U.S. Supreme Court cases, **DBR** makes the U.S. Constitution come alive for young people by revealing how this dynamic document plays a significant and palpable role in their daily lives.

THIS FIELD TRIP IS FREE FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS!

Discovering Justice takes care of all transportation costs associated with **DBR**!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Discovering the Bill of Rights takes place in a courtroom and engages students in a modified mock appellate argument. Upon entering the courtroom, the students are divided into two teams, each representing one of the parties in the case. Students receive workbooks containing the text of the amendment, the case facts, and guiding questions aimed to help teams develop their arguments.

CHOOSE TO EXPLORE A FIRST AMENDMENT OR A FOURTH AMENDMENT CASE.

Each **DBR** uses a landmark Supreme Court case as a teaching tool to illustrate how the Constitution protects individual rights. Prior to the program date, classroom teachers select one of the cases (case descriptions on next page). Teachers should provide their students with some general information about the Bill of Rights and the relevant amendment before the field trip.

*The remainder of **DBR** is comprised of four distinct parts:*

- 🔥 **A SIMULATION ACTIVITY** introduces students to the basic facts of their case and provides the foundation for a general review of the Bill of Rights and a close reading of either the First or Fourth Amendment.
- 🔥 In **SMALL GROUP SESSIONS** students develop arguments that support their team's side of the case.
- 🔥 A team of four to six students **PRESENT ARGUMENTS** after a brief lesson in courtroom procedures. An actual judge or a volunteer attorney will preside over the arguments and ask questions designed to help students clarify their thinking and encourage debate.
- 🔥 The judge or volunteer attorney leads **A CLASS DISCUSSION** following the oral arguments to emphasize how the issues in the case are relevant today.

CASE DESCRIPTIONS

TINKER V. DES MOINES INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (FIRST AMENDMENT)

This case established a new standard for student speech in public schools. Two siblings, John and Mary Beth Tinker, and their friend Christopher Eckhardt wore black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. The Tinkers and Eckhardt were suspended for violating a school policy that banned wearing black armbands. Alleging that their First Amendment rights had been violated, the students (through their parents) filed suit in federal court, eventually appealing their case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

NEW JERSEY V. T.L.O. (FOURTH AMENDMENT)

This case established new standards for a constitutional search of a public school student's property. While searching a freshman girl's purse for cigarettes, a high school administrator found evidence that the student was selling marijuana. The student was tried and convicted of delinquency. She appealed the conviction, claiming that the search violated her Fourth Amendment rights. The case ultimately went before the U.S. Supreme Court.

LEARNING GOALS

DBR aligns with the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework by addressing themes such as:

- 🔥 The evolution of the concepts of personal freedom, individual responsibility, and respect for human dignity; and
- 🔥 The growth and impact of centralized state power.

DBR directly incorporates material included in U.S. History I Learning Standards, including:

- 🔥 U.S. 1.9 (Reasons for the Passage of the Bill of Rights); and
- 🔥 U.S. 1.9B (the particular ways in which the Bill of Rights protects basic freedoms, restricts government power, and ensures rights to persons accused of crimes).

BY PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM, STUDENTS WILL:

- 🔥 Identify important rights protected under the First or Fourth Amendment;
- 🔥 Learn the facts of a U.S. Supreme Court case based on those rights;
- 🔥 Apply the relevant amendment to the facts of the case;
- 🔥 Understand that the challenge of implementing the Bill of Rights is finding the balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of government; and
- 🔥 Make connections between the Bill of Rights and their own experiences.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE A DISCOVERING THE BILL OF RIGHTS FIELD TRIP:
Please contact Jennifer Jackson, Discovering Justice Legal Programs Associate, at jjackson@discoveringjustice.org or 617-748-9641.