



Gearing Up For Your Transitions

Courts in the United States of America **High School Seniors**

The student will:

- A. Analyze the federal and state court systems.
- B. Identify various state and local courts in Delaware
- C. Evaluate local or state criminal activity reported in the media which could lead to a review by the State Supreme Court.

Introduction – Context

The objective of this unit is to provide students with exposure to and information on courts and the progression of cases through state and federal courts in the United States. Courts are typically categorized by Local, State and Federal Jurisdictions. Delaware Courts have varying jurisdictions and hear multitudes of cases. The students will be exposed to information on all levels of state courts. The student will further be exposed to sample judicial proceedings that could result in a review by Delaware Supreme Court. The student will be led into discussions, analysis and illustrations of legal scenarios and judicial proceedings

Instruction

The student will:

- A. Explain differences in federal and state court systems using proper legal terminology.
- B. Explain differences in state and local courts in Delaware using proper legal terminology.
- C. Analyze local and state criminal activity reported in the media and decide what legal question the Delaware Supreme Court may be asked to decide.

The Instructor will:

- A. Provide information to students on the differences between federal and state court systems while introducing proper legal terminology.
- B. Provide information to students on the various state and local courts in Delaware while introducing proper legal terminology
- C. Provide technology opportunities such PowerPoint, Web Quest and student led internet research.
- D. Provide illustrations, structured group activities and roundtable discussions on local or state criminal activity reported in the media which will be heard in Delaware Courts and could lead to a review by the Delaware Supreme Court.

Materials and Media:

- A. Multimedia presentations such as videos and video streaming for viewing examples of legal issues and judicial proceedings.
- B. PowerPoint for presenting visual examples of Courts and judicial proceedings.

C. Internet for research and WebQuest of laws and roles of courts.

Assessments:

- A. Essential Questions discussion
- B. Teacher Observation of discussion and group participation
- C. Weekly quizzes

LESSON PLAN

Goal: The student will identify various state and local courts in Delaware.

1. Objective:

Identify various state and local courts in Delaware.

- A. Local Courts hear violations of local codes or ordinances.
- B. State Courts hear violations of State laws or civil cases.

2. Introduction:

As you will recall, we explored laws and the differences in criminal and civil laws. Today we are going to begin exploring how different courts hear violations of law. Over the next several days we will examine different courts that are asked to interpret the laws that society has decided we should follow.

Courts are basically divided into three categories: Local Courts, State Courts and Federal Courts.

Can someone give me an example of a case a Local Court may decide? How about a State Court? What about a Federal Court? Civil Law as we have learned is harder to express than criminal law isn't it. Civil cases are generally decided by State or Federal Courts. Local Courts decide cases that are violations of local codes or ordinances.

State court cases are heard by an elected judge. Delaware has a number of courts that hear a variety of cases. Courts are charged with the task to hear evidence and decide if there has been a wrong. If the court decides that there has been a wrong, they are then charged to decide what to do about it. As we have seen there are laws for each court to follow and each level of court in Delaware has rules it must follow when deciding a case. Today we are going to begin defining and categorizing courts and exploring how they affect our lives and the daily activities of Criminal Justice professionals.

3. Instruction:

A. By linking to previous discussions of amendments and landmark court cases associated with those amendments, the students have established schema to make educated assumptions of how court decisions can change and influence government standards. Students have also demonstrated knowledge of how media can influence society's standards for its government.

B. Using lecture and a PowerPoint presentation, the students will be exposed to the levels of courts in Delaware and a visual representation of the contemporary examples of new terms will be utilized.

4. Strategies for Higher Order Learning:

- A. Seated lecture time
- B. Instructor led discussion
- C. Visuals provided by PowerPoint and Streaming Video.

5. Practice and/or Review:

Review for this lesson will come in future discussions regarding Criminal and Civil Courts in the United States. The students will be given essential questions and group discussion topics to apply the information given. Internet opportunities will be given to search the State of Delaware website to further apply the knowledge.

6. Monitor and Adjust:

By listening to student feedback and by observation, adjustments will be made to focus and redirect questions and unclear information.

7. Re-teaching:

In the likelihood that students do not understand Courts in America, redirection and review will be provided with positive feedback.

8. Materials/Media and their use:

- A. PowerPoint presentation for visual enhancement of legal terms.
- B. Streaming Video presentation from State of Delaware Administrative Office of the Courts website giving a simple explanation of court procedures.

9. Alternative / Supplemental Activities:

- A. Printed student copy of legal terms, if needed for notes.
- B. Additional time to research Local and State Courts.
- C. Printed copy of "Understanding Our Court System" from Delaware Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts, if needed for review.

10. Assessment:

- A. Teacher observation of student feedback and interest

11. Arrangement:

- A. Desks are arranged in row seating
- B. Textbooks provided at each desk
- C. PowerPoint and presentation system
- D. Access to student computers if necessary

12. Closure:

Can you see now through this brief introduction that there are a multitude of Courts charged with the task of interpreting Criminal and Civil Laws? Can someone give me an example of a Local Court? What type of violation may that court hear? Can someone else tell me a brief scenario where a person may find themselves in General Sessions Court? Tomorrow we will begin a more in depth exploration of Delaware Courts and see how the courts progress in jurisdictions. We will also begin to explore how higher courts can reverse rulings of the lower courts.

Adapted from Dan Mahaney's The Courts, Teachers.net