

Common Law-Related Education Strategies

Youth Forum Procedure

Teacher Instructions

Youth forums are student-led discussions of legal issues. They give students the opportunity to come together to debate issues that concern them. Forums are more formal than teacher-led discussions, with written procedures that enable students to take leadership roles, allowing teachers to step back and serve as consultants.

Forums can take between two and five class periods, depending on the complexity of the issues, the amount of additional research the students might want to do to prepare for the discussion, and the amount of time needed for discussion.

Procedure.

1. The class selects five students to serve as the forum panel. The teacher might also select the panelists. Assign and prepare for roles as follows:
 - a. One student will serve as the chairperson of the forum.
 - b. Other panelists should be assigned to present the issues for discussion, providing brief history of the issues, why they were selected, suggesting some guiding questions, etc.
2. Other students prepare for the discussion by studying the issues. They may also be assigned to role-play the community-member roles if roles are provided in the lesson. They may also adapt the roles or create their own.
3. Teachers and students might identify community members to invite to participate in the forum. Community members may represent themselves or be assigned roles to play.
4. After students have had time to prepare, conduct the youth forum. The forum can involve students from one class, several classes, a grade level, or the entire school. As inclusive a discussion as possible is encouraged.
5. Comments made during the forum may be recorded and shared with others. If this is desired, a student should be asked to write down comments and summarize and report them.

Student Handout: YOUTH FORUM CHAIRPERSON SCRIPT

Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for coming. My name is _____ and today I am serving as the Chairperson of this Youth Forum. The purpose of today's forum is to hear from you--your thoughts and concerns.

During this Youth Forum, there are some rules we would like everyone to keep in mind.

- Everyone will have an opportunity to speak. Please raise your hand; we will call on you in the order the hands are raised.
- Personal comments about anyone are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- We want to have a helpful discussion. We may ask clarifying questions so that we are certain that we understand what you are saying.

Let's begin.

(One by one participants are asked to present their views. They should each have approximately five minutes to present their positions and answer any questions from the panel or the audience. If they are playing roles, they should answer questions in a manner consistent with their roles.)

Conclusion

It's time to close today's forum. I hope you enjoyed it. We heard a lot of valuable information. Thank you for participating.