

Constitution Day Skit

The skit consists of the following cast of characters:

King George/the Judge played by Jackie

The following played by the students:

Cookie Thief

Soldiers

Attorney

Protestors

People Praying

Journalist

One child steals a cookie, which sets the skit in motion. He is escorted by the soldiers to “the dungeon” where he awaits his sentence. The attorney argues on behalf of the thief, the protestors protest his incarceration, the people praying pray for the thief, and the journalists report on the situation.

In the first rendition, the attorney must argue to King George on behalf of the thief. King George is displeased with the argument and sends the attorney to the dungeon as well. The soldiers escort the attorney away. King George then asks the protestors why they are protesting, they explain, and are promptly sent to the dungeon as well, escorted by the soldiers of course. The people praying are then sent to the dungeon, and so is the journalist.

Jackie, now acting as herself, tells the students that we will try the skit again using the U.S. Constitution. One by one, the students are let out of the jail and they are told why under the constitution it is wrong for them to be in jail (i.e. the cookie thief wasn't given a fair trial, the attorney is allowed to disagree with the king, in fact it's his/her job to defend the defendant, the protestors have freedom of speech, the people praying have freedom of religion, the journalist has the freedom of the press). Once they, and the class, are told what rights have been violated under this scenario they take their seats.

Now the skit is replayed using the constitution. Only students who did not participate in the last scenario can volunteer for this go-round. First, the journalist goes to the protestors and asks them to explain why they think the cookie thief is innocent, then he/she goes to the people praying (can have one journalist report on the protestors and one on the prayers “back to you john, kind of thing”). Then the attorney makes her argument to the judge (Jackie) on behalf of the client and he/she is either set free or sentenced.

Comments:

We usually set this up with a little lecture intro about the “birth” of the Constitution, dates, etc., sort of wing the skits, and then do a run through of the Amendments and what they mean.

This hasn't been tried yet, but it might be more fun for the kids if they were broken up into small groups (each group having one person who will be the “actor”) and came up with what their “group representative” or actor was going to say and do during the skit. The roles can be read out to the students, and they can then be broken into even groups (the number of each student would be dependant on the number of students in the class). I would tell the teacher about this beforehand and ask if there is a particular way she/he thinks is best to do this; have the students choose, place them in groups by going in numbers around the room (1,2,3,4, then they break up by number), etc. Each group can then decide who will be the actor of the group, and what they will do, i.e. the reasons the protestors are protesting (can have protestors on either side of the issue), what the attorney will argue, does the journalist have a slant? etc.

If this seems too complex or time consuming, it works with the simple fly-by method as well. Just make sure the students know what each role means and how to play it (we get students milling about not really knowing why they're up there, and the it's just a cookie, or cookie's are delicious argument from the lawyers, protestors, and journalists a lot, it's best if you can steer the kids away from these kinds of argument)

Feel free to make any variation on this skit that you would like, it is fun for the kids but is definitely not perfected, and it is fun to play around with!

Saved in S:/Paralegal/JackieMisc/Constitution Day/Constitution Day Skit