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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1988 Volume I: The Constitution in Public Schools

Debating Teenage Rights

Guide for Curriculum Unit 88.01.01
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Each year, the State of Connecticut, through the Connecticut Department of Education's Law Related Education Program, sponsors a Young People's Debate Program. The tournament, for middle school students, begins in the fall of each year with a workshop for interested teachers and coaches and culminates with the final round some time in May.

One issue is chosen for debate each year. It is researched throughout the state by competing schools. The topic remains the same for the whole year and students debate both sides of the issue during the various competitions. The issue chosen each year is of interest to teenagers and relates to their lives. Although the topic for each year's tournament is not announced until September, the cases chosen for this unit are related to the rights of teenagers, and in that respect they may very well be related to future topics for the state debate tournament. They are also important because they relate to the lives of all students and are excellent topics for classroom debates at both the middle and high school levels.

The purpose of this unit is twofold. First, it will explore several landmark Supreme Court cases related to teenagers, and second it will explain the basic rules of debate as well as the format followed by the state in preparation for the competition.

(Recommended for Social Studies and U.S. History classes, grades 6-12)

Key Words

Debate Teenage Rights Adolescents Forensics School Desegregation Judicial System Education Contemporary Law Supreme Court Cases

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