



Yale-New Haven  
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1995 Volume III: The Constitution and Criminal Justice

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## Understanding Criminal Justice

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.03.03  
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For many people, the criminal justice system may seem intimidating. Most people have never even seen the inside of a jail. Their only experience with police officers may have been a quick stop on the highway for a speeding ticket. For people who have never been charged with a crime, facing criminal charges can be disturbing. However, our system of justice aims to prevent people from being unfairly convicted. It guarantees many legal rights to anyone charged with a crime. This unit is designed to discuss those rights and give students a basic understanding of the steps in the criminal justice system.

The purpose of writing this unit on “Understanding Criminal Justice” is to raise the level of awareness in students, so that at an earlier age, they will avoid participating in activities that will lead them into criminal situations. Students will use this knowledge to change their attitudes about the society in which they must live. Students in grades 4-6 will benefit from this unit the most. However, the general information can be used with children in all grades. Students will learn, what is crime and criminal law? They will look at characteristics of some serious crimes and will discuss Constitutional rights of juveniles as it equips students with critical thinking and problem solving skills.

It is suggested that teachers use this unit with students to foster an awareness of our criminal justice system and to create a safe, order, nurturing and supportive environment for our children.

(Recommended for all subjects, grades K-5)

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