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

The Constitution, Juvenile Justice, and You

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.03.05
by Cynthia H. Roberts

This unit was written for Special Education students in grades 9-12, who are not always easily motivated and whose reading levels are below grade level.

This unit will assist in developing both knowledge and skills. It will help to examine all issues essential to helping students to understand the government.

The first part of this unit will focus on the overview of the Constitution which includes 1) the Preamble, which gives a statement of goals for our government, and 2) the Bill of Rights, which describes our plan for citizen rights.

The second part of this unit will discuss landmark cases affecting teenagers. The cases will form the basis for classroom debates. The cases discussed relate to the question of whether or not teenagers are entitled to the same protection under the law as adults. The third category deals with substantive issues. It deals with cases that relate to the question of what teenagers can and cannot do in society.

This unit will emphasize that the best and most lasting political, social and economic changes result from the functioning of moderate political processes, not from violence and intimidation.

The purpose of this unit is to help students acquire knowledge and skills needed to carry out their responsibilities and protect their rights as citizens of a free society.

Each activity will challenge students to use information, ideas and skills. These application exercises allow students to move from lower to higher cognitive levels. Students will not only read about making decisions, they will practice making and judging decisions.

(Recommended for Civics and Social Studies, grades 9-12)