



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

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## **You and the Law: Beating the Odds**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.03.08  
by Frances Tilghman

The curriculum's lesson plans are designed to be covered in grades 6 through 8 Social Studies, Language Arts or Social Development classes. Lessons are to:

1. Assist teachers in the areas of helping students develop a positive self-esteem and understanding the importance of building good character.
2. Teach the children through discussion and activities their basic rights as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution while at the same time teaching the children that these rights have not always been afforded to certain people. The lessons outline the struggles which have been a part of obtaining and maintaining these Constitutional rights.
3. Show children that they have options in life and that short-term solutions to what may be perceived as a problem may result in long-term consequences that will destroy their lives.  
Suggested book: *When a Hero Dies*.
4. Help children to identify objectively, without anger, obstacles in life. The particular obstacle this unit is designed to address is that of racism in general, and, specifically, racism within the criminal justice system. Children will be presented with deciding whether to become a statistic or to change the statistics. The development of an ongoing program involving law enforcement personnel as mentors, tutors and counselors will help to accomplish this task.
5. Develop a penpal program with a suburban school. The program will introduce students to each other through writing friendly letters, making and sending birthday cards, holiday drawings, sharing photographs and visiting each other's schools. The culmination of this year's program would be an activity where children from both schools can socialize outside of the school environment. Examples: picnic, field day activity, bowling tournament.

(Recommended for Social Studies, Language Arts and Social Development, grades 6-8)

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