



Wisconsin Court System

Supreme Court Teaching Tools

The Supreme Court is committed to speaking with the people of the state about the judicial branch and listening to their concerns. The Court offers a variety of education and outreach programs to help teachers and students become more familiar with the work of the Judiciary – the least understood branch of government. The Court's educational programs not only teach about the judiciary and its role as an independent branch of government, but provide interesting substantive materials that can be used to improve a student's skills in careful reading, persuasive writing, and detailed analysis.

wicourts.gov website

Information about each of the Court's educational programs is available on the Wisconsin court system's website: www.wicourts.gov. A list of educational resources can be found at:

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/index.htm, along with links to more teaching resources, including a roundup of national resources. Direct links to specific programs are included below.

Teacher's guide

This comprehensive guide was developed to complement the former Justice Teaching Institute and helps teachers teach about the courts. It's available online in pdf format at: <https://www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/teacher/docs/teacherguide.pdf>

Court with Class

Court with Class is an award-winning program produced in conjunction with the State Bar of Wisconsin to make Supreme Court proceedings understandable and accessible to all high school students in Wisconsin.

While visiting the Wisconsin Supreme Court students are able to: listen to attorneys present oral arguments, see the behind-the-scenes activities of the highest court in the state, and talk with a Supreme Court justice in an informal, question-and-answer session.

Prior to the visit, teachers receive information about the court system, including biographies of the justices, a synopsis of the case to be heard and other law-related materials to help students prepare for their day in court. Schools also are encouraged to invite an attorney from the community to discuss the case and court procedure in advance.

Court with Class is a joint venture between the Wisconsin Supreme Court and the State Bar of Wisconsin. In implementing this program, we are grateful for the State Bar's support, as well as the dedication of teachers, administrators and school board members, who help us

deliver the message about the important role courts play in our democracy.

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/teacher/courtclass.htm

iCivics

iCivics is an innovative web-based civics education project launched by retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. The site features interactive online games developed for middle-school students and teaching guides and lesson plans for teachers. Justice O'Connor visited Madison in May 2010 at the invitation of then Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson and the State Bar of Wisconsin to help launch iCivics in the state. Abrahamson serves as state co-chair of iCivics, along with Justice Ann Walsh Bradley.

For more information, visit: www.icivics.org

Case of the Month

The Case of the Month project provides high school teachers with some of the necessary tools to educate their students about the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Each month, during the Supreme Court's session, a "teachable" case will be highlighted. It will be chosen from the cases the Court will hear that month.

The case of the month includes a plain-English summary of the case and links to the briefs, Court of Appeals decision (if applicable), and the audio recording of the Supreme Court's oral argument.

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/teacher/casemonth/index.htm

History tools

In the year 2003, the Wisconsin Supreme Court celebrated the 150th anniversary of its formation as a separate court with a variety of events and publications designed to tell the story of the state's highest court. The Wisconsin courts have many stories to tell. Legal lore, trivia, biographies,

summaries of famous cases, and even a script for a play and an Emmy-award-nominated video documentary are available through this site.

Following are links and tools for learning about the history of the courts in Wisconsin. For more information visit the history of the courts section at:

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/teacher/history.htm.

Informational handouts

Handouts on a variety of court-related offices and functions are available at

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/handouts.htm. Other

handouts, prepared by the court information office, describe the following topics:

- Administrative structure of the courts
- Board of Bar Examiners
- Circuit courts
- Clerk of Circuit Courts
- Clerk of Supreme Court and Court of Appeals
- Consolidated Courts Automation Services (CCAP)
- Court of Appeals
- Court Programs for Wisconsin veterans
- Court system expenditures
- Effective Justice Strategies
- How a case gets to the Supreme Court
- Interbranch communication: the Wisconsin plan
- Judicial Conference
- Judicial education
- Judicial system overview
- Jury service
- Municipal courts
- Office of Lawyer Regulation
- Planning and Policy Advisory Committee (PPAC)
- Public information resources
- Public outreach and education
- Seal of the Supreme Court
- State/federal judicial systems
- Supreme Court
- Supreme Court history
- Teaching tools
- Volunteer opportunities to serve on court-related committees and boards
- Wisconsin State Law Library

Activity book

This 36-page booklet designed for younger kids, is available through the court system website and in a downloadable pdf format. The introduction to the activity book reads: "One day you may go to a courthouse as a witness, juror, visitor, or for some other reason. The activities in 'What's Happening in Court?' explain what happens in court, who works there, and what the rules are. Learning about the courts is an important way to prepare yourself to be a responsible citizen." Additional resources for kids can be found at:

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/kid/index.htm.

Law Day

Each year, judges and attorneys across Wisconsin develop programs and presentations to mark Law Day, celebrated on May 1. Celebrations often take place in county courthouses. Teachers are encouraged to invite local judges to help deliver Law Day sessions in the classroom.

A directory of circuit court judges by county can be found at: www.wicourts.gov/contact/docs/circuit.pdf

Law Day materials are available on the American Bar Association's website: www.lawday.org.

Rope of Sand, an original play based upon Ableman v. Booth

Rope of Sand is an original play by Madison playwright Marc Kornblatt. Commissioned by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in 1998, *Rope of Sand* was performed at the Madison Civic Center under the direction of Betty Diamond as part of the court system celebration of the state's sesquicentennial. This play is copyrighted, but the author has agreed to permit schools to use the script at no charge. The script can be found at:

www.wicourts.gov/courts/resources/teacher/docs/ropeofsand.pdf

Stand the Storm documentary

This half-hour documentary which aired Dec. 16, 1998 on Wisconsin Public Television brings the legal, academic and African-American communities together to tell the story of Joshua Glover and Sherman Booth and the role they played in Wisconsin's 1854 fugitive slave case, *Ableman v. Booth*. This case, juxtaposed with the modern civil rights movement, puts into context Wisconsin's stand on slavery and the state's rights movement. To purchase a videocassette recording of the program, call Wisconsin Public Television at (608) 263-4575.

Wisconsin Blue Book

The 2005-06 Wisconsin Blue Book includes an 85-page feature story that illuminates the Wisconsin court system. The article explains the court system's structure and procedures, including how criminal and civil actions begin, how juries are selected, and how the appeals courts operate. It features a timeline of important events in court system history, information on alternatives to court, and 44 color photographs that offer glimpses inside circuit courtrooms, showcase courthouse art, and go behind the scenes at the Supreme Court.

Also highlighted are current issues facing the judiciary, including keeping politics out of judicial elections, balancing privacy against public access to case records, and safeguarding access to justice for the state's growing population of non-English-speakers.