

Using “ Pennsylvania’s Courts: A Video Introduction” a video from the AOPC to talk with students about how our courts work.

The video presentation can be found online at:
<http://www.aopc.org/Links/Public/>. Click on “Pennsylvania’s Courts: A Video Introduction.

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Framing Question: What do lawyers and judges do?

Before showing the DVD, I like to start with an oldie but goodie lesson entitled “10 Things I’d Rather Be Doing” in which you challenge the students to come up with the answer to the hardest question they will ever be asked-- can the students think of ten things they would rather be doing than listening to you. Make some lists (pick some students to write on the board or they can bring giant post-it notes and markers to write on the walls) and then go through each item and show how the law is connected to everything they have thought of (sleeping, from the tags on pillows to laws about where you can and cannot sleep; shopping, from implied warranties to the “legal tender” on the money). This underscores why they need to know about the law as they prepare to move forward with their lives. (refer to a more detailed lesson and some other alternatives on the PBA Web site at www.pabar.org/lre.asp.)

Challenge the students to come up with new ideas that they think are unconnected to the law. Throw the challenge back to the class and see if they can think of anything unconnected to the law.

Now raise the question about why the lawyer/judge is in this class. See if the students have ideas—don’t be offended if their ideas involve some sort of money making scheme. Explain to the students about pro bono service and public interest law—this is a form of preventative pro bono. Research shows that law-related and civic education, when properly presented, reduces delinquent behavior. This is the time to do some introduction of yourself—what kind of law you handle, where you grew up, etc.

You might want to reference the www.palawhelp.org website which has tons of materials about civil law (it is our client pro bono site).

Keep it as interactive as possible and be prepared for the questions about how much you make! If you decide to show the DVD on the Pennsylvania Courts at this time, you will need to introduce it by noting that conflicts arise in our system of laws and that we turn to the courts to resolve those conflicts.

If you have time for a second lesson, which can be done either before or after showing the DVD, move to the “No Vehicles in the Park” lesson, the classic lesson in the field that grew out of Harvard and Yale Law Schools in the fifties. The lesson is also provided on the PBA Web site.