

# The Constitutional Mindwalk



**Grade Levels:** K – College

**Academic Standards:**

Pa. Academic Standards for Civics and Government 5.1 & 5.3

**Presentation:**

Ask a local lawyer or judge to visit your class and do this lesson with the students.

**Note to lawyers and judges conducting the lesson:** Don't feel like you have to know the answer for every idea - take along a pocket copy of the Constitution (all of the students should have one from their teacher) and make it a class project to find the answer/connection in the Constitution. The students will enjoy it!

**Objective:**

The purpose of the lesson is to demonstrate how the Constitution impacts everyone's life everyday.

**Preparation:**

Ask each student to make a list of things he or she has done that day before the lawyer or judge visits the class.

It would be helpful to have those lists prepared prior to the visit.

**Possible Student Actions:**

- Taking a shower: In the Pa. Constitution - right to clean air and water.
- Eating breakfast: Regulation of food quality under the Commerce Clause.
- Going to school: There is nothing about schools in the U.S. Constitution. The right is retained by the states in the Tenth Amendment - It is in the Pa. Constitution, Article III, Section B, General Assembly must provide "a thorough and efficient education."
- Anything purchased: Congress has the right to regulate commerce through the commerce clause under Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 and to coin money under Article 1, Section 8, Clause 5.
- Received allowance: Congress has the right to coin money under Article 1, Section 8, Clause 5.
- Saying the Pledge (or refusing to): First Amendment Establishment Clause or Free Speech issue.

- Receive or send a letter: Article 1, Section 8, Clause 7 allows Congress to regulate the mail.
- Skateboarding to school: Making skateboards and selling them is a federal, commerce clause issue. Regulating their use (not on certain sites like the school) is a local concern, reserved to the states as part of the broad reservation of state's rights in the 10th amendment.
- Locker Searched: The 4th Amendment protects against unreasonable searches. In *T.R.O. v. NJ*, the Supreme Court said that students have the right to privacy in their lockers. Since then, schools have generally said that the lockers belong to them and that students only can use them if they give up any privacy rights. Ask the students the policy at their school!
- Listened to a talk radio show: First Amendment: freedom of speech.
- Attended prayer group before school: First Amendment: freedom of religion.

**The same exercise can be done using the newspaper...**

- President visits troops: He is the Commander-in-Chief: Article II, Section 2
- Police arrest suspects in a crime: Much of the Bill of Rights is impacted.

A fun, and hard, exercise is to try and find any news items in the newspaper that have no connection to the Constitution. Work hard enough and you may be able to find one.

A great project would be to create a mural (or a poster, Web site, collage, picture, poem or story) showing the Constitution impacting everyone's life...everyday.

A limited number of U.S. Pocket Constitutions are available from the Pennsylvania Bar Association at no cost through a grant from the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation. Please email your requests to [susan.etter@pabar.org](mailto:susan.etter@pabar.org). Be sure to include your name, phone number, address to mail the books to, quantity needed, grade using the books and date needed.