

# *How to Do a Dialogue on the* **RULE of LAW**

If you are a lawyer or judge interested in leading a Dialogue on the Rule of Law at a school in your community, follow these steps to help ensure a meaningful experience for you and the students.

## **STEP 1. IDENTIFY A SCHOOL.**

Contact a school where you or your friends' children are students, a school in your neighborhood, or a school where you know members of the teaching staff. Friends and co-workers might also recommend a school that would like to participate in the Dialogue program.

## **STEP 2. SET UP AN APPOINTMENT FOR YOUR VISIT.**

Contact the school principal or head of the relevant department (social studies, history, government, or civics). Explain the program to them and offer them a copy of the Dialogue materials. Ask if they or another teacher in their school would be willing to devote a class session to the Dialogue and schedule a day and time. You will want somewhere between 45 and 90 minutes to make the Dialogue a meaningful experience.

## **STEP 3. DISCUSS YOUR VISIT WITH THE TEACHER.**

Discuss the ages and experiences of the students. Determine what part of the Dialogue you would like to focus on and provide the teacher with a copy of the materials you wish to discuss. Also consult with the teacher about additional background materials that might help the students. Request that the teacher have name tags or tent cards printed with the students' first names, and ask for any other equipment you might need (a blackboard or flip chart, for example).

## **STEP 4. PREPARE THE CLASS FOR YOUR VISIT.**

Ask the teacher to distribute any materials or assign any background readings you want the class to discuss at least one day before your visit.

## **STEP 5. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR YOUR DAY IN CLASS.**

Know your subject. Review the Dialogue materials before you go to class and think of additional questions you think will help the students explore the issues raised by the Dialogue. Have a planned outline of where you would like the discussion to go, but be prepared to be flexible. Personalize the topic by thinking of experiences from your own practice that you can relate to the students.

## **STEP 6. FOLLOW UP AFTER THE DIALOGUE.**

Write a thank-you note to the teacher and the class. Make yourself available to answer questions the class may raise following the Dialogue.

### GETTING STARTED | PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Dialogue on the Rule of Law is designed for use by lawyers, judges, and teachers in school classrooms and with community groups. The Dialogue offers numerous perspectives on the rule of law, giving you different options for different audiences or classrooms. Part I offers an opportunity for participants to consider what the rule of law means, looking at different components and definitions of the rule of law. Part II looks at the rule of law in history, focusing on the rule of law and revolutions, the rule of law and slavery, and the movement toward an international rule of law. Part III considers the rule of law in literature and movies, and provides different options for discussions with elementary, middle, and high school students, as well as adult audiences.

In consultation with the teacher or community group leader, decide which part of the Dialogue would be most interesting and appropriate for your group. You will find suggested questions throughout the Dialogue to help you begin your discussion of the topics the Dialogue introduces. We encourage you to be open to new directions your Dialogue may take as you and your group explore the many issues related to the rule of law.

### THE ABA DIALOGUE PROGRAM

The Dialogue on the Rule of Law is the sixth installment in the ABA Dialogue Program. The Dialogue Program provides lawyers and judges with the resources they need to engage high school students and community groups in discussion of fundamental American legal principles and civic traditions. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy introduced the first Dialogue program, the Dialogue on Freedom, at the 2002 ABA Midyear Meeting in Philadelphia. In 2003, the ABA introduced the Dialogue on *Brown v. Board of Education* to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark ruling. In 2005, the Dialogue on the American Jury complemented the ABA's American Jury Initiative. In 2006, the Dialogue on the Separation of Powers was introduced, followed by the Dialogue on Youth and Justice in 2007. For more information on these Dialogues, visit <http://www.abanet.org/publiced/features/dialogues.html>.