



CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT  
COURTHOUSE EXPERIENCE TOUR GUIDE HANDBOOK

## Courthouse Experience Program Description

### **Background**

Since 1985, Classroom Law Project has coordinated the Courthouse Experience Program, providing an opportunity for nearly 6,000 students each year from 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades to visit the Multnomah County Courthouse and Justice Center.

Classroom Law Project coordinates the program by scheduling tours, recruiting volunteer tour guides (many of whom are retired educators or attorneys), meeting student groups, and reviewing the court docket of cases for the day.

### **Student Outcomes**

During their Courthouse Experience, students will:

- Observe first-hand the operation of the justice system
- Connect the Constitution's Bill of Rights with the justice system
- Learn about careers in the justice system
- Understand and respect the judicial system
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the system
- Practice observation, fact-gathering, and critical thinking skills

### **General Program Procedures**

- August/September: Teachers throughout the state are informed about the Courthouse Experience & Registration opens on the website for tours beginning at the end of September.
- September – May: Teachers register for a tour through the website.
- September – May: Teachers receive a confirmation notice & information about the Courthouse Experience.
- August/September: Volunteer guides are recruited and trained. At least one week before the scheduled tour, the volunteer contacts the teacher to confirm the tour.
- The day of the tour:
  - Guide contacts all the judicial assistants to confirm the schedule of cases.
  - Guide discovers as much as possible about the morning cases and hearings. In many instances this is when they learn of changes in the docket schedule, what students may see if they visit a trial, what time would be best to have students visit the courtroom, and if a particular proceeding may not be appropriate for the age of the students.
  - The volunteer meets the class(es) and provides an orientation.
  - Name badges are given to all participants to identify that they are on a tour sponsored by Classroom Law Project.
  - The adult chaperones are given a copy of the docket of cases in progress during the tour.
  - Students (in groups of up to 8 students each) begin their courtroom visits with an adult chaperone.
- Sixty students is the maximum number of students for any given day. Classes should arrive by 9:00am and the tour will officially end at noon, although classes are welcome to stay longer to tour downtown Portland, eat lunch, or possibly meet with judges or court personnel.

### **Resources**

Teachers are directed to the Courthouse Experience Resources on the CLP website for materials on topics including courtroom decorum, legal vocabulary, trial procedures, jury duty, and an overview of the Oregon Courts.