

TYLA CIVILITY *for All*

Civility for All – High School – Discussion Guide

Civility in the Classroom is designed to educate school students about fostering civility and civil discourse in the classroom and looking at examples of civil discourse throughout history and in the legal profession.

There has been a stark decline in civility among the legal profession but also within society at large. Frequent references are made to the famous friendship between the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia as reminders that even two of the most outspoken and seemingly different people on our Nation’s highest court could be friends despite their different points of view. As Justice Sandra Day O’Connor said, “Unfortunately, civility is hard to codify or legislate. Discourtesy is notoriously subjective – you know it when you see it – and assessing blame is somewhat akin to asking a pair of fighting fourth-graders ‘who started it.’...In the end, it is by deed rather than by decree that attorneys teach each other that it is possible to ‘disagree without being disagreeable.’”

Targeted TEKS

- High School Standards– TEKS WG.15(A), WG.21(D-E), WG.23(C), WH.21(F), WH.28(E), WH.31, US.9(E), US.22(A, C), US.28(B, E), US.31, Govt.1(B, E), Govt.2(A-B), Govt.13(A-B), Govt.14(A-C), Govt.19(A, C, D), Govt.21

Discussion

- What is an attorney? What characteristics are important for an attorney to have? What is the role of attorneys in society?
- Do you know any attorneys? What have your interactions with attorneys been like?

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “civility”? Can you give me some examples?
- What are the characteristics of a civil person? How can we learn to be civil? What methods or practices can we use to become more civil?
- How much of a problem do you think uncivility is?
- Do you think it is important to treat each other with civility? Why is it important to treat each other with civility? Why should society value civility?
- Why do you think people act uncivil? What are some examples in history where leaders have behaved with incivility? What was the result of them being uncivil? Were the results positive or negative? How could they have behaved more civilly? What could the results have possibly been if they had behaved civilly?
- What some examples in history where leaders have acted with civility? What are were the results?
- Were the results positive or negative?
- Do you think attorneys are civil? Do you think attorneys provide a good model for civility in society?
- What are some examples of an attorney that behaves with civility? What are some examples of an attorney that behaves with incivility?
- What skills are necessary for attorneys to be civil? How can they improve and/or practice those skills?
- What can everyday people learn from the civil behavior of attorneys?
- How should a lawyer respond to uncivil conduct? How should you and everyday citizens respond to uncivil conduct?
- Do you think there should be a punishment for uncivil conduct?
- What are some non-legal consequences that someone may face from uncivil conduct?

