

Justice Teaching expands into private schools

Due to popular demand, Justice Teaching is expanding its interactive exercises on constitutional law to Florida's private schools and more volunteers are needed.

When Justice Teaching was launched four years ago by Florida Supreme Court Justice Fred Lewis in order to establish a firm foundation, it was initially available only to public schools. Now, with virtually every public school in Florida participating in the program and some volunteers still waiting to be matched with a school, the Select Committee on Justice Teaching unanimously voted to expand the program.



Noting there are many private schools in Miami-Dade County, 11th Circuit Judge Michael Genden said children attending private schools should have the same opportunity to benefit from Justice Teaching that students enjoy in public schools.

And Third District Court of Appeal Judge Linda Ann Wells, who has worked to secure volunteers for public schools, has always been a strong supporter of this expansion.

The program aims to benefit students in the following ways: promote an understanding of Florida's justice system and our laws, develop critical thinking abilities and problem-solving skills, and demonstrate the effective interaction of our courts within the constitutional structure.

The expansion to private schools is currently underway. Just as he did with public schools, Justice Lewis plans to contact the director of each private school in Florida to explain the concept and goals of Justice Teaching. First, information on 1,500 private schools must be entered into a computer data system. Private school directors interested in bringing Justice Teaching into their schools need to register their contact information with the database, as Justice Teaching works to find as many attorney and judge volunteers as possible.

As Justice Lewis often asks attorneys and judges: "If not us, who will step forward?" To get involved, register with the Justice Teaching website at www.justiceteaching.org/JTProgram/Pages/Welcome.aspx. After entering your Bar number, you will be asked to select a school to work with. To receive the required training, contact your local Justice Teaching coordinator judge. The list of coordinator judges is available at www.justiceteaching.org/local_contacts.shtml.