

Brevard eighth-graders look at justice

*BY KEYONNA SUMMERS
FLORIDA TODAY*

VIERA — About 80 judges and attorneys from the 18th Judicial Circuit Court today joined Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis as he kicked off Justice Teaching, a program which will pair a judge or attorney with each middle school in the Brevard County.

The program, which has already attracted about 3,000 judges and attorneys in the state, provides students with an interactive, hands-on approach to the inner-workings of the government and justice system, Lewis said.

“Civic education has suffered because there’s only so many hours in the day,” Lewis said. “The goal is that hopefully the future generations will be stronger in this democracy because they know and understand the fundamentals and core values that are the foundation of a democratic society.”

While the Justice Teaching curricula in other counties have featured discussions, mock trials and other activities for high school, middle school and even elementary students, Brevard County Schools superintendent Richard DiPatri said Brevard’s program will initially target the county’s roughly 5,000 eighth-graders.

“Civic education is always important,” DiPatri said. “To bring judges (and other officials) into the classroom . . . who live the process every day, interacting with students, that’s a perfect opportunity for our students.”

Read more about this story in Friday's FLORIDA TODAY.