

# TEACHING TOOLS: NYS UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

### Citizenship and the Immigration Experience\*

#### LEARNING CONTEXT

##### Purpose:

The purpose of these activities is to highlight some of the benefits and responsibilities of being or becoming a United States citizen. Students will learn about the immigration and naturalization experience in order to better understand the privileges and duties associated with citizenship.

##### Grade Level:

6, 7, and 8

##### Learning Standard:

Social Studies Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

##### Core Curriculum (includes excerpts from the Social Studies Guide with Core Curriculum):

Grade 6: The grade 6 social studies program emphasizes the interdependence of all people, keying on the Eastern Hemisphere. Sixth graders learn that the citizens of the nations of the Eastern Hemisphere have rights and responsibilities as defined by their constitutions and by other laws of their nations. A thorough knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the United States will provide a solid foundation for comparing the rights of citizens in Eastern Hemisphere nations with the rights of citizens in the United States. Such a comparison will help students understand why individuals from those nations would want to immigrate to the United States.

Grade 7/8: Social studies content in grades 7 and 8 focuses on a chronologically organized study of United States and New York State history. Course content ties political, geographic, economic, and social trends in United States history to parallel trends and time frames in New York State history. The national history of immigration in this country is closely linked with New York State history, since many immigrants entered the United States through New York City. It is important for students to understand how the immigrant population continuously impacts the cultural, economic, and political development of our State and Nation. It is also important for students to understand the basis for various government positions regarding immigration, in light of the constant reevaluation of the role of government in our society.

\* Developed with the assistance of Thomas Gambino, Law-Related Education, Dyker Heights Intermediate School, Brooklyn, New York

### Concepts/Themes:

- Understanding and appreciating the role of government in meeting the needs and wants of communities.
- Examining how government protects the rights of individuals and promotes the common good.
- Analyzing the source of the nation's values as embodied in federal and state constitutions, statutes and case law; appreciating the principles, ideals and core values of our democracy (human dignity, liberty, justice and equality).
- Analyzing how our government is premised on majority rule that simultaneously protects minority rights.

### Prior Knowledge:

The teacher and students should have some experience with locating and utilizing Internet resources.

## PROCEDURE

Teachers and students will utilize web sites to research their genealogy, immigration trends, and to learn about the naturalization process.

### Special Message to Teachers

The activities within each Teaching Tool are designed to build on each other to, first, develop students' knowledge of basic law-related concepts; then, show students how the concepts are utilized or implemented in the court system; and, finally, demonstrate how students should apply the concepts in their everyday lives. However, the various activities that comprise each tool may also be used as stand-alone exercises. For example, you may choose to incorporate only Day 1 or Day 3 into your course work. Or, you may choose to use Day 1 in connection with one unit and then use Day 2 in a later unit.

**There is more than one way to utilize the Teaching Tools – the proper use is the use that is beneficial to your classroom.**

### Day 1 – Ancestry, Genealogy, and Immigration

The teacher should explain to the students that unless they are descendants solely of Native Americans, then their ancestors immigrated to the United States at some point in time. The social studies curriculum emphasizes the different phases of immigration to the United States, from the Colonists to recent immigrants, and the teacher should be prepared to highlight points of interest

from these various phases. Collectively, students should comprehend what their ancestors gave up and hoped to gain by immigrating to America. The students should divide into groups to select a topic to research from the following time periods:

- Explorers first entering the New World
- 1840s - 1890s
- 1890s - 1920s
- Post WWII
- present day

Students should understand the social, economic, political, and religious consequences that caused and resulted from the immigration topic that they select. They should be able to name famous immigrants and historical events from their respective time periods.

Using the Internet, students may sign onto [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com) to research their own genealogy or search for information regarding other people bearing their family names. Various projects may be developed by the teacher to utilize this website, depending on student interest.

## Day 2 – Immigration and Naturalization

Students should explore the information provided at the following websites:

[www.ins.usdoj.gov](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov)

[www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov)

The teacher may make up a sample test so that students will become aware of the information that may appear on a naturalization test (see Sample Questions, attached).

Students should understand and be able to discuss the following concepts:

- why they or their ancestors may have wanted to immigrate to the United States
- whether it is fair to have tests and interviews for people who wish to become citizens; whether an immigrant should know United States history in order to become a citizen
- what would happen if there was an “open door” policy regarding immigrants who wish to become citizens
- whether older immigrants should be excused from testing requirements

After grasping an understanding of what is necessary to become a United States Citizen, the class may visit an Immigration and Naturalization ceremony. The students may also create a ceremony or host an INS ceremony to honor any recently naturalized students or children from other countries who have been adopted by United States citizens.

## ASSESSMENT

Oral or written presentations may be used to share results with the rest of the class and for purposes of evaluating student performance with respect to these projects.

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

What is the executive branch of government?  
What is the judicial branch of government?  
What are the duties of the Supreme Court?  
What is the Bill of Rights?  
Who said, "Give me liberty or give me death?"  
Which countries were our enemies during WWII?  
What are the 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> states of the Union?  
How many terms may the President serve?  
Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.?  
Who is the chief executive of a local government?  
According to the Constitution, what are the requirements to become President?  
Why are there 100 Senators in the Senate?  
Who selects the Supreme Court Justices?  
How many Supreme Court justices are there?  
Why did the Pilgrims come to America?  
What is the chief executive of state government called?  
Who was the main author of the Declaration of Independence?  
When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?  
What is the basic meaning of the Declaration of Independence?  
What is the national anthem of the United States?  
Who wrote it?  
Where is the notion of freedom of speech guaranteed?  
What is a minimum voting age in the United States?  
Who signs bills into law?  
Who was the President during the Civil War?  
What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?  
What is the name of the group of the President's closest advisors?  
Which President is called the "Father of our country"?  
What Immigration and Naturalization Service form is used to apply to become a naturalized citizen?