

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE SERIES

I. Introduction

Beveridge & Diamond, P.C. (“B&D”) has taught a 7-8 week environmental course to sixth graders at Birney Elementary School in Washington, D.C. for several years. B&D created the course as part of its commitment to the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs’ Public Education Legal Services Project (“Project”). Through the Project, Washington, D.C. law firms partner with underserved inner-city schools.

For the ABA, B&D, working with the Air Quality Committee, has created a packet of materials organized in such a way that any law firm, governmental entity or nonprofit organization can teach the course to elementary school students. Moreover, with some editing, the course, or individual parts of it, could also be taught to junior and senior high school students.

The project has been evolving since its inception 5 years ago. Some classroom experiments have worked well; others have failed. Some years, homework has been required; other years it has not. Course materials have been changed based on the expertise of the lawyers and paralegals leading each class. Some years guest speakers have been available; other years they have not. There have also been different field trips (e.g., to a municipal waste combustor, to the Baltimore Aquarium, to the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers aboard the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s boat). We expect that whoever uses these materials will want to make similar modifications to meet the needs and interests of the teachers, school and students.

II. The Classes

There are seven classes and a field trip that make up the course. The classes address air pollution, water pollution, solid waste and biodiversity. The majority of classes relate to air pollution, focusing specifically on acid rain, smog (low level ozone issues), stratospheric ozone, global warming and the regulation of SO₂ under the cap and trade program. The schedule of classes is as follows:

- Class 1 - Introduction, overview, hospital waste disposal problem;
- Class 2 - Air pollution, global warming, poster-making;
- Class 3 - Power generation, power company speaker, precipitator experiment;
- Class 4 - Acid rain, SO₂ trading and allowance game;
- Class 5 - Solid Waste, composting, CERCLA game;
- Class 6 - Water pollution, topographic maps;
- Class 7 - Biodiversity and endangered species, international whaling negotiation;
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation Potomac River Field Trip

We have taught one class per week, and each class runs roughly one hour and fifteen minutes. The field trip has taken almost the entire school day.

In these materials we have provided the following for each class: a brief introduction; materials that we have taught from, including outlines and tips from our experience; and a list of resources for researching the topic or obtaining further materials. We also have included homework and other helpful materials.

III. Field Trips and Purchases

We have annually organized a field trip for the class at the end of the course. We also annually purchase and retire SO₂ allowances and an acre of rainforest on behalf of the students. See classes 4 and 7 for details. We tie these activities into the class, and the students' participation and completion of the homework.

We have had great success with a boat trip with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation on the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. The trip is easy, economical and a wonderful way to open the students' eyes to the natural world in their own back yard. It also is a good way to reinforce the class lessons, including witnessing pollution and its effects, viewing the local power plant and the sewage treatment plant, and spotting several endangered and threatened species.

In prior years, we took field trips to the local municipal waste combustor and the Baltimore Aquarium. These trips have proven more complicated, but have been equally rewarding for both the students and teachers.

II. Logistics

The course requires a core of committed individuals to teach and assist. Being an attorney is not a requirement, and paralegals have been some of the program's most devoted teachers. However, our experience is that the program requires 7-10 reliable people. We generally choose one or two people to lead each class, with 4 or 5 others helping run the experiments or supervising small groups of students in the exercises that are a key part of each class. We try to keep the lecturing to a minimum, and have an experiment, game, mock negotiation, mock trial, or other activity, in each class. We coordinate with the Principal and the sixth grade teachers to schedule the classes each year.

III. Resources

Below are general resources for the course. For more specific resource lists, see the Resources Section for each class.

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Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

General - <http://www.washlaw.org/>

EPA

General - www.epa.gov

Kids Page - <http://www.epa.gov/kids/>

Air - <http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/air.html>

Acid Rain - <http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/airairpolacidrain.html>

Water - <http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/water.html>

Solid Waste - <http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/wastes.html>

Recycling - <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/recycle.htm>

State Environmental Agencies

State environmental agencies also offer a wealth of information and resources for teachers. Additionally, they are more focused on the local environment and local issues than the federal agencies. We have found Texas' Commission on Environmental Quality particularly useful for teaching aids.

Texas - http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/air/monops/lessons/lesson_plans.html

Clean Air Conservancy ("CAC")

The CAC has a wealth of materials related to air pollution, especially acid rain and cap and trade. We obtained the cap and trade board game (see class 4) from them, along with an excellent packet of materials on teaching students these concepts. We have used CAC as our broker each year to purchase SO₂ allowances. However, our recent attempts to contact them have failed. If you are unable to reach CAC, please contact Beveridge & Diamond, and we can make copies of materials for you. The information for the CAC is:

Clean Air Conservancy - School Program
1360 W. 9th St, Suite 400
Cleveland, OH 44113
216 621-2008
www.cleanairconservancy.org

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

General - www.cbf.org

Field Trip -

Linda Tison
Education Coordinator
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
6 Herndon Ave.

Annapolis, MD 21403

Fax 410-268-6687

- or

Cindy Ryder

cryder@cbf.org

800-445-5572

Fax 410-268-6687

Miscellaneous

Acorn Naturalists - teaching supplies - they sell a vast array of books and activities -
www.acornnaturalists.com