

No Vehicles in the Park

Objectives:

- To learn about the court's role as interpreter of laws.
- To understand the sometimes difficult duty of considering the letter of the law as well as the intent of the law.

Grade Level: 3 - 6

Activity Format: Art work, small group work, classroom discussion.

Materials: Crayons and markers.
Plain white paper on which students will create a park.
Copies of "No Vehicles in the Park Activity."

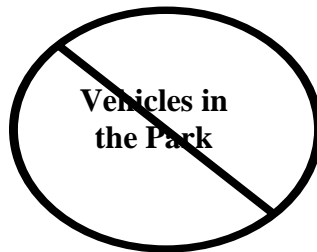


So why are we here today?

- The judiciary is one-third of our government and is responsible for assuring justice in our society by resolving disputes peacefully. We balance the other two branches of government and protect people's rights and liberties under the Constitution and the law.
- A judge must consider the law and sometimes interpret it and try to figure out the letter of the law, or what lawmakers intended to do when they created the law.
- You're going to get a chance to become a judge and consider dilemmas similar to what I am faced with when I am in court.

Design a park

- *[Distribute crayons, markers and blank paper.]*
- First, I want you to pretend that you live in the town of Beautifica. The city council has asked you to create a lovely park that preserves some of the trees, grass and nature that is not disturbed by city noise, traffic, pollution and crowding. It should be a place where citizens can go and find playgrounds and picnic areas.
- Using the materials we've passed out to you, I'd like you to take a few minutes and draw a picture of your park.
- *[Allow students time to design their parks. However, be sure to limit their time to about 10 minutes or so in order to assure enough discussion time.]*
- I would like you now to draw the following sign at the entrance of your park. *[Draw the sign on the board.]*



You be the judge

- The law – no vehicles in the park - seems clear, but some disputes have arisen over the *interpretation* of the law.
- I'd like you to now imagine that you are the judge. You need to interpret the law in the cases described on the paper you will receive. I want you to keep in mind the **letter** of the law as well as the *intent* of the law. *[Describe what "letter of the law" and "intent of the law" mean.]*
- *[Divide students into small groups.]*
- *[Distribute copies of "No Vehicles in the Park Activity." Assist the groups in completing the activity. Again, be sure to leave enough time for discussion.]*

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Discussion

- *[Walk through the “No Vehicles in the Park Activity,” using the cases to debate the letter of the law and the intent of the law.]*

Options

- Discuss what factors you consider when you are faced with ruling on whether a case follows the letter and intent of a law.
- Discuss the role of the courts in relation to laws (The courts help interpret laws, and protect people’s rights and liberties under the law. However, laws can only be created or changed through action of the MN Legislature, U.S. Congress or a local government entity.).

Q&A

- Invite students and teachers to visit the court system web site at www.mncourts.gov.

No Vehicles in the Park Activity



1. John Smith lives on one side of the town and works on the other side. He will gain 10 minutes if he drives through the park.
 Yes No
2. There are many trash barrels in the park so that people may deposit all litter there, thereby keeping the park clean. The sanitation department wants to go in to collect the trash.
 Yes No
3. Two police cars are chasing a suspected bank robber. If one cuts through the park, he can get in front of the suspect's car and trap him between patrol cars.
 Yes No
4. An ambulance has a dying car accident victim in it and is racing to the hospital. The shortest route is through the park.
 Yes No
5. Some of the children who visit the park want to ride their bicycles there.
 Yes No
6. Mrs. Thomas wants to take her baby to the park in his baby buggy.
 Yes No
7. Jim and John have come to the park to ride their skateboards on the road in the park.
 Yes No
8. Mrs. Shultz has just gotten a new motorized wheelchair and is looking forward to "drives" through the park.
 Yes No