

**Elementary Age Field Trip**  
**United States Courthouse, Indianapolis**

Total time: 2-3 hours\*

\*Please note that each of these activities can be shortened, eliminated, or extended depending on the amount of time a school has available to visit.

**Orientation** (15 minutes)

All visits by groups to the courthouse will begin with an orientation session. Students will be told the ground rules of the courthouse: no running; voices must be kept down at all times; keep to one side of the hallways; be silent when asked in order to avoid disturbing any trials in session. The facilitator will then give general information about the federal court system (courts in the Constitution, what a district court is, what types of cases are heard here, how cases progress to the Supreme Court, how many judges our district has) and a brief history of the building (date of construction, what preceded this building, the post office and other government agencies that have operated in the building, etc.) These discussions will include photographs and other images to engage the students.

**Tour** (45-60 minutes)

Students will be guided on a tour of the building. Topics covered will include more specific details on the role of the federal courts; the art and architecture of the building; symbols that reflect justice and government; features of courtrooms; early Indiana history; 20<sup>th</sup> Century American history; and some legends and stories about the courthouse. The tour incorporates elements of a scavenger hunt to keep children's attention.

**Visit with a Judge** (30 minutes)

Whenever possible, students will visit with a judge in a courtroom, depending on the judges' availability. Each judge generally chooses what he or she will talk about, but common themes include explaining what judges do; how one becomes a judge; what types of cases a judge hears at the federal level; exciting or interesting cases he or she has heard; the federal judiciary and the Constitution; the importance of good citizenship; and jury service. Judges are also receptive to questions by the students and enjoy engaging them in discussions. Generally speaking, if you book your field trip well in advance, you will have a better chance of meeting with a judge.

**Activity/Lesson** (45-60 minutes)

Students will complete one of the following activities, selected by their teacher or leader beforehand.

**Activity 1: Using Objects and Images to Understand Our Court**

Students will be divided into small groups by numbering off. Each group will receive one object which the facilitator will distribute. The students are to answer a set of questions specific to each object, with one student recording their answers. Groups are also required to come up with at least one question that they have about the object. Groups will have 5 minutes to complete this task.

One person from each group will then have 2 minutes to share their group’s answers and observations with the rest of the class. A third group member will present the question the group developed about the object. The facilitator will record the students’ observations and questions for everyone to see and discuss their answers with the class as each group takes its turn, clearing up any confusion or incorrect answers given by the students. The facilitator will also try to answer the students’ additional questions about the objects.

Once all groups have reported, the facilitator will ask the students how each of the objects relate to the courts and lead a discussion on this topic.

The objects and questions presented to students will be:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>1) Gavel</u></b></p> <p>What is this? What is it used for? Who uses it? Where would you expect to see this? Why is it important?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>2) Robe</u></b></p> <p>What is this? Who uses it? When might they use it? Where would someone wear this? Why is it important?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>3) Figure of Justice</u></b></p> <p>What is this? Where would you expect to see this? What is she holding? Why is she holding these things? Why is this object important?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>4) Court seal</u></b></p> <p>What is this? Who uses it? What is it used for? Where would you expect to see this? Why is it important?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>5) Court reporter machine</u></b></p> <p>What is this? Who uses it? What is it used for? Where would you expect to see this? Why is it important?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>6) Supreme Court building photographs</u></b></p> <p>What is this building? Where is this building? Who works in this building? What happens in this building? Why is this building important?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>7) Capitol building photographs</u></b></p> <p>What is this building? Where is this building? Who works in this building? What happens in this building? Why is this building important?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>8) White House photographs</u></b></p> <p>What is this building? Where is this building? Who works in this building? What happens in this building? Why is this building important?</p>

## **Activity 2: Design a Federal Courthouse**

Students will be broken up into groups of 3 and 4. With the students having gained an understanding about the Southern District of Indiana, the features of a courthouse and courtroom, and the function of the court\*\*, they will be presented with the following hypothetical situation:

Because the population in Southern Indiana is growing, the United States Congress has created a fifth division in our district besides the ones in Indianapolis, Evansville, New Albany, and Terre Haute (a map of the current district and its divisions will be displayed). You are part of a team of architects that has decided to submit a proposal to design and build the new courthouse. However, there are many other teams submitting proposals as well. Only one team will win approval to build the new courthouse, so it is important that you work with your teammates to design the best building possible.

Before you can draw out your plans, you need to answer a few important questions.

Groups will have 5 minutes to answer the following in writing:

- How big would the building be?
- What would you put in it, and why?
- Where would you build it, and why?
- What type of decorations would there be inside the building?
- What would the outside of the building look like?

Once they have finished answering the questions, they will be told:

Now you can create the drawings of your courthouse. One of you will draw a blueprint, which is a layout of what the building will look like inside. One will draw what is called an elevation, or what the building looks like on the outside. The other people will draw what you'd like your courtroom to look like. You have 20 minutes to do your drawings.

When the 20 minutes are up, the students in each group will hold up their drawings while one student in each group will have 1 minute talk about their design by telling where it would be built, why they have designed it as they have, etc.

The facilitator will guide these presentations and help students connect what they have put in the drawings with what they have learned about the federal courts.

Students will vote for which courthouse should be built after every team has had its turn.

\*\*In the event that the activity takes place before the tour, students will revisit their drawings after the tour to discuss changes they would make to their design based on what they have learned.

### **Activity 3: Our Rights**

The lesson will commence with the facilitator asking “What is a right?” and listing the students’ responses for everyone to see. She will then ask students where Americans find their rights (in the Constitution). She will also ask what the first Ten Amendments to the U. S. Constitution are called (Bill of Rights).

She will then explain that students will be broken up into groups of five. Each student will act as a Supreme Court justice. In these groups, the justices will be told to pretend that it is a time of national crisis, with the threat of chaos looming on the horizon. In order to protect the security of the nation, they have to decide, from a handout listing 10 basic rights of American citizens, which five to keep for the common good and which 5 to discard (if they do not choose 5 to discard, public fear and disorder will threaten *all* rights).

The 5 justices in each group will debate and make their decision. Once the five have reached a consensus, each justice will choose one of the rights they kept and draw a representation of this right. After fifteen to twenty minutes, each justice will rise and show their drawing and tell why the group chose to keep that right.

Meanwhile, the facilitator will keep track of which rights each group has chosen to keep and which to discard. After each group has presented, the facilitator will gather the students as a whole group and reveal the tally of which rights were most kept and which were most discarded, and lead a discussion on why all of these rights are important and how they help maintain order in the United States. She will also debrief the students, asking what they learned and what was difficult about the activity. She will explain how the Supreme Court protects their rights, using examples of specific importance to students (e.g., *Tinker v. Des Moines*- Mary Beth Tinker was only 13!) and take any questions the students have.

### **Indiana Department of Education Grade Five Standards that this field trip meets:**

#### **Social Studies**

- 5.2.4 Identify and explain key ideas about government as noted in founding documents of the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Northwest Ordinance, United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- 5.2.8 Describe the three branches of the United States government, their functions, and their relationships.
- 5.2.9 Demonstrate civic responsibility in group and individual actions, including civic dispositions — such as civility, cooperation, respect, and responsible participation.

- 5.2.11 Use a variety of information resources to identify and evaluate contemporary issues that involve civic responsibility, individual rights, and the common good.

### **English/Language Arts**

- 5.7.1 Ask questions that seek information not already discussed.
- 5.7.2 Interpret a speaker's verbal and nonverbal messages, purposes, and perspectives.
- 5.7.3 Make inferences or draw conclusions based on an oral report.
- 5.7.4 Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view for an oral presentation.
- 5.7.5 Clarify and support spoken ideas with evidence and examples.
- 5.7.6 Use volume, phrasing, timing, and gestures appropriately to enhance meaning.
- 5.7.13 Emphasize points in ways that help the listener or viewer follow important ideas and concepts.
- 5.7.15 Make descriptive presentations that use concrete sensory details to set forth and support unified impressions of people, places, things, or experiences.

### **Art**

- 5.1.3 Identify themes and symbols used in works of art and artifacts throughout history that portray universal ideas and beliefs.
- 5.7.1 Demonstrate refined observational skills through accurate rendering of representational objects and subject matter from life.
- 5.7.2 Utilize new interests, current events, or personal experiences as subject matter in the work.
- 5.7.3 Generate symbols and subject matter and borrow ideas from an artist's work in order to communicate ideas.
- 5.10.2 Identify and apply criteria for assessment in their work, in peer critiques, and in self-assessment.