

"Liberty Under Law: Empowering Youth, Assuring Democracy"
by Dana Berkowitz

At my school we have the Third Grade 30, which is considered the laws for third grade. At the beginning of the school year we discussed the rules. Then we had to sign to say we would follow them. These rules were made by the third grade teachers and the principal. They act like Congress and the President. The first time you break one of these rules you get a warning, which is like a ticket. If you do it again, then you get a note sent home in your agenda book, which is like getting a second ticket. If you break another rule you go to the Principal, which is like being arrested. If you break a rule again, you go to the guidance counselor that is like going to court. If you do it one more time, you get suspended which is like being guilty and going to jail.

If you think a rule is unfair there is not a lot you can do about it at my school, but I still think there should be. As you can see, my school works like our government. But I think the system would work better if students were more involved. One way the students could be involved is a student court that would decide the punishment for the student. The court might call up his or her teacher to watch for behavior problems. The teacher would say his or her part then the kid would have a turn to say his or her side of the story. The five student judges on the court would decide whether the student was wrong or not and then make the punishment fit the crime.

The students could vote whether a law is fair or not fair. I would make it so we could have fun doing it. The students could vote for the teacher of the week for the whole entire school. Every week. Then the principal would count all the students' votes. Then the next morning he would say the teacher that got the most votes. If the students were more involved our school would be a mini democracy!