What is Project LEAD?
Project LEAD is an effective law-related education program established by the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office in partnership with the Constitutional Rights Foundation. Its goal is to teach children that the choices they make today can affect their lives forever. Since the program’s inception in 1993, Project LEAD has touched the lives of tens of thousands of students in public schools throughout Los Angeles County. It also has been replicated in several other states and foreign countries.

How are schools and classrooms selected to participate in the program?
The program targets fifth-grade students and is open to all Los Angeles County public schools. Project LEAD relies on prosecutors and other professionals to volunteer as facilitators. Although we try to accommodate as many public schools as possible, we do not always have enough volunteers to accommodate all classes.

Why fifth-grade?
Fifth-graders are in a critical period of youth development. Project LEAD gives students the motivation and essential skills they need to meet the many new challenges they will face in middle school. Each lesson has been developed specifically for fifth-grade reading and comprehension levels.

May classes be combined to reach more students?
No, classes may not be combined for this program. Project LEAD works best when a facilitator or team of facilitators is assigned to one class only. Combined classes do not allow the facilitators to get to know the students and vice versa. Many of the goals and objectives of Project LEAD are based on consistent role models coming to class each week and getting to know the students.

What is the duration of the program?
Facilitators generally teach one hour a week for approximately 20 weeks. Teachers and facilitators coordinate the day and time each week that works best. We try to keep the program’s duration as close to that of a traditional school year as possible, running from late September to early May. Project LEAD does not have to start during the first or second week of school. Rather, we suggest starting the program once the school year is in full swing.

Who is eligible to serve as a Project LEAD facilitator?
The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office encourages its prosecutors, investigators, field deputies, paralegals, hearing officers and law clerks to volunteer to teach Project LEAD. Representatives from other prosecutorial agencies also participate.

How are Project LEAD facilitators selected?
Project LEAD facilitators are professionals who work in the criminal justice system and volunteer their time to teach Project LEAD. Some facilitators work in teams of two or more. That way, if one facilitator is unavailable to teach a class, the other facilitators will be there to step in. With a team, the students also will have a chance to get to know more than one facilitator.

How may I learn more about the curriculum?
Visit the Project LEAD website at http://projectlead.lacounty.gov. Although access to the detailed lesson plans is exclusively accessible to facilitators, principals and teachers may view an overview of lesson plans and gain access to school materials on the website. You also will find information about research on Project LEAD.
What are the responsibilities as a teacher?
Teachers should exchange contact information, including email addresses and cell phone numbers, with assigned facilitators at the beginning of the school year. Teachers should remain in the classroom during all Project LEAD lessons. Facilitators are not certified to teach elementary school and should never be left alone with the students. Most facilitators welcome teacher participation, especially when students get excited and a little rowdy. The Project LEAD website contains optional teacher materials that the teacher may want to incorporate into the regular lesson plan or use to prepare students for their next Project LEAD class.

What about field trips?
The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office offers two optional field trips as part of Project LEAD. There is no cost to schools for the field trips. The District Attorney’s Office arranges for two buses per school each school year. Facilitators may opt for classes to participate in one or both of the field trips. Facilitators coordinate all field trip details with teachers directly. Teachers are responsible for permission slips. A field trip to the Museum of Tolerance usually takes place between November and February. The Museum of Tolerance offers an introduction to the history of the Holocaust and contemporary issues of tolerance and respect. Later in the year, facilitators also have the option of bringing students to their local courthouse, where they may meet a judge and other criminal justice system professionals. Students should dress appropriately for both field trips and should not bring additional items, such as phones or music players.

What if a teacher wants a specific facilitator to return to class next year?
The teacher or principal should make arrangements with the facilitator before the school year ends. Then, the teacher may contact the facilitator at the beginning of the new school year to confirm his or her participation. All participating schools in Los Angeles County must have a current school agreement on file with the District Attorney’s Public Affairs Division.

Why doesn’t a facilitator return phone calls immediately?
Please be patient. Remember that attorneys and law enforcement officers have many day-to-day responsibilities. An attorney’s schedule is often decided by the court and may vary each day. Judges may order attorneys and investigators to be present at a moment’s notice. Investigators may be called out to a crime scene and be unable to fulfill their other commitments, no matter how important they are. Court proceedings, especially trials, often take longer than expected, which may force facilitators to reschedule other appointments. You should not view a facilitator’s commitment to your students as being diminished if he or she is sometimes unable to be in class.

What if I have a problem with the Project LEAD facilitator assigned to a class?
Immediately contact the Project LEAD Coordinators in the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Public Affairs Division at 213-257-2960 or LEAD@da.lacounty.gov.