



BY JUDY L. MARCHMAN

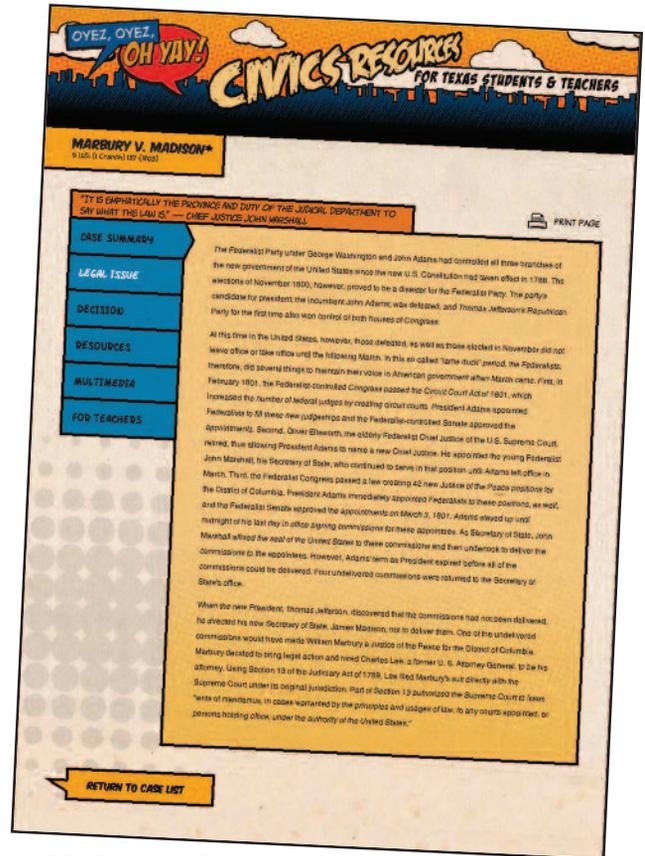
Remember studying the landmark Supreme Court cases in junior high or high school? *Brown v. Board of Education* comes to mind. As do *Marbury v. Madison* and *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. Texas students today are expected to learn not only these cases but also a number of more recent Supreme Court decisions that have been added to the state's government and history curriculum.

Last year, the Texas State Board of Education approved new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards for social studies curriculum — the first in 13 years — to be implemented for the 2011–12 school year. Under the new requirements, middle and high school students are expected to analyze various landmark court cases and be tested on the material.

Civics education is a key component of State Bar President **Bob Black's** initiatives this year, and he has placed a particular emphasis on educating Texas students as a way to help create more responsible citizens who one day will vote, sit on a jury, or become a public servant. "Civics education is critical to fostering engaged citizens who understand our democracy and the liberties the rule of law protects," Black said.

So, when he met with Jan Miller, director of the State Bar Law-Related Education (LRE) Department, in February about his presidential initiatives, they discovered a practical way the Bar could provide civics education to Texas students — and their teachers — by providing information and resources on the landmark court decisions included in the new TEKS standards. The need for these resources is at the heart of the new State Bar project, *Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay! Civics Resources for Texas Students and Teachers*.

Middle school students will be asked to study five seminal U.S. Supreme Court cases: *Marbury v. Madison*, *McCulloch v. Maryland*, *Gibbons v. Ogden*, *Worcester v. Georgia*, and *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. For high school students, the cases range from the familiar — *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Miranda v. Arizona* — to more recent cases such as *Edgewood ISD v. Kirby*, *Texas v. Johnson*, and *Grutter v. Bollinger*.



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But it's not only the students who have to learn about these cases. For many teachers throughout the state, especially teachers who might not normally provide instruction on court cases, getting up to speed on the subject matter is imperative. Also, just finding solid resources that teachers can easily access can be challenging. Many schools are dealing with a shortage of textbooks or are moving to include more digital content in the classroom.

THESE COURT CASES EXPOSE STUDENTS TO SOME SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY. THEY ENABLE STUDENTS NOT ONLY TO BE AWARE OF THESE EVENTS BUT ALSO TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT CERTAIN PARTS OF THE CONSTITUTION.

– JERRY PERRY
LRE SCHOLAR

USING TECHNOLOGY

Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay! — a play on the chant “oyez, oyez, oyez” to call the Supreme Court to order — was conceived as an interactive web-based project to assist Texas teachers and their students in preparing for the new TEKS standards. The project’s primary component is a website — texasbar.com/civics — that contains information about the required court cases to help both students and teachers. It can also be accessed from LRE’s website, texaslre.org.

“Technology allows us to connect with and engage students in new and innovative ways,” said Black.

Presented in a dynamic, comic book style, the website includes links to a case summary for each required court case at both the middle and high school levels, videos, multimedia links, and curriculum materials and links for teachers. Students can watch introductory videos from Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice **Wallace B. Jefferson** and retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor on the importance of civics education and the rule of law.

“The website is fantastic,” said Dodie Kasper, who is head of the social studies department at the Frisco Independent School District and teaches AP Government. “I think that the site will be a huge benefit to teachers in Texas. The addition of new cases as a result of the TEKS revision has created a need for this type of information.”

The case summaries, which include a breakdown of the question the Supreme Court or a lower court considered and a discussion of the court decision, were prepared by LRE Scholar Jerry Perry, a retired professor of government from Angelo State University in San Angelo, with input from several of LRE’s teacher consultants, including Yvonne Greenwood and Janie Worst. Perry took longer, more elaborate case summaries and honed them to more web- and student-friendly versions. A PDF of each case summary is available by clicking the appropriate button on the case page.

“These court cases expose students to some significant events in American history,” Perry said. “They enable students

not only to be aware of these events but also to think critically about certain parts of the Constitution.”

Kasper, for one, likes the user-friendly nature of the site. “By clicking on the case, I get all the info for that case from student resources to teacher resources. ... The condensed versions of the cases will be very useful with students, who often don’t like to read a lot.”

In addition to the case summaries, teachers can access links to other curriculum and lesson plans provided by LRE, the Texas Young Lawyers Association, and other well-known civics education websites. Links are also provided to the entire Supreme Court opinion and to the Chicago-Kent College of Law’s The Oyez Project, which provides oral argument downloads for more recent Supreme Court cases.

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Another major component of the *Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay!* website are videos featuring the five required middle school cases. The first video to be completed details the *Marbury v. Madison* case and includes commentary from leading Constitutional scholars.

“Because today’s students are media-oriented, having videos about the cases will enable them to come to an even better understanding of these landmark cases,” said Perry, who also provided feedback during video production.

Each video is about 15 minutes and provides an entertaining but instructional viewing experience. LRE is preparing reading guides for the videos, so as students watch the videos, they have to pay attention in order to fill in blanks or answer questions about what they have learned. The videos will be available in DVD format as well.

The website and Marbury video have been well received by teachers who have seen them. “As I was glancing at the site, a colleague was very impressed with it and I sent him the link,” Kasper said.

With the *Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay!* website and videos, Texas teachers now have more tools at their disposal to help shape the state’s next generation of civic leaders. ✪

CIVICS EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO FOSTERING ENGAGED CITIZENS WHO UNDERSTAND OUR DEMOCRACY AND THE LIBERTIES THE RULE OF LAW PROTECTS.

– BOB BLACK

PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF TEXAS

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– DODIE KASPER

**HEAD OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT
FRISCO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**