



Highlights of Law-Related Education and Judicial Outreach to Students California Judicial Branch, 2006–2008

The judicial branch is committed to educating Californians of all ages about our court system. The following highlights are examples of kindergarten through postcollege education initiatives with which the branch is involved. Using a variety of approaches, these initiatives directly educate students of all ages about how the law and courts work and how they affect our society and students' lives.

Some of these projects are led by Supreme Court, appellate court, or superior court leaders and others are led by staff in the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). This list is just a sampling and does not include all local court projects targeted toward this audience. Some individual projects are grouped into broader categories.

K–12 Students

DUI Trials in the Schools

In 2006, the AOC received a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to implement a program bringing trials for driving under the influence (DUI) to middle schools and high schools across the state. Courts in nine counties received grants to conduct DUI trials in schools, accompanied by classroom curriculum to help the students better understand the consequences of driving under the influence and how the justice system works. In 2007, AOC staff visited counties where courts are already conducting these trials in the schools and collected information on best practices. Mentors and a model for implementation were chosen to help build a statewide model curriculum. The model curriculum includes pretrial/sentencing and posttrial/sentencing educational sessions in the classroom. The trial/sentencing itself is a real adult DUI trial/sentencing at which students observe the proceedings and then ask questions of the defendant. Student surveys were developed and administered to assess the overall impact of the program.

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California Youth, Peer, and Teen Courts

California has an extensive network of peer/youth courts also known as teen or student courts. Under the Judicial Council–approved model, an adult judge presides over this collaborative justice juvenile court proceeding where the youth offender's case is heard in front of a jury of youth peers. In addition to the youth defendant and the youth jury, the roles of the prosecution, defense, and bailiff are performed by young people. Youth representing various peer/youth court programs and adult staff and volunteers from across the state gathered at their third annual summit on June 27–29, 2008, on the campus of the University of California at Davis. The California Association of Youth Courts will be a clearinghouse for teen court coordination throughout the state. Judge J. Richard Couzens, of the Superior Court of Placer County, is the current president of the association.

Contacts:

Judge J. Richard Couzens (Ret.), Superior Court of Placer County, rcouzens@placerco.org

Karen Green, Placer County Peer Court and Treasurer of the California Association of Youth Courts, karengreen@peercourt.com, 916-663-9227

www.peercourt.com/pages/history.htm (Placer County Peer Court)

Donna Strobel, AOC, 415-865-8024

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/collab/peeryouth.htm

www.youthcourt.net

Peer Courts DUI Prevention Strategies Program

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) awarded the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) a three-year grant to partner with the California peer courts to develop and implement the DUI Prevention Strategies Program. The purpose of the program is to lower the number of DUI offenses among teen and adult populations while altering their attitudes and behavior toward reckless activities by educating teens and parents about the dangers of drinking and DUI. An education specialist was hired to develop the DUI Prevention Strategies curriculum, with input from eight mentor peer courts. Once the curriculum was developed, the peer court grantees implemented the program. A Web developer was contracted to design an interactive Web site to supplement the curriculum, which has been launched and is available to the public. The Web address is www.stopteendui.com. Professional evaluators were hired to review the program for impact and best practices. Presurveys and postsurveys were given to participants in the program to see if any significant changes occurred in knowledge and behavior. There will also be a three-month follow-up to determine whether these changes affected their attitude toward DUI and reckless behavior.

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Courts in the Classroom Web Site

This Web site was developed by the AOC and targets children in grades 8–12. It is designed to help students learn about the foundations of the law and its relationship to a democratic society and to spark curiosity and a desire to learn more about how our system works. This is accomplished largely through the use of stories presented in an online animated comic book format. Currently, the site includes more than 400 Web pages, all fully illustrated and animated, and covers five landmark cases and several minor cases related to young people, modules on due process, checks and balances, the role of the court in civil and criminal law, what judges do, and an introduction to the concept of judicial independence. Contact Karen Viscia, project lead, to obtain a copy of the Web site materials and a link to the development Web site.

Contact: Karen Viscia, AOC, 415-865-7453, karen.viscia@jud.ca.gov

Appellate Court Trials in High Schools

The Appellate Court Experience (ACE) is designed to deepen high school students' understanding of the judicial system. The program includes a classroom curriculum, followed by a visit to a Court of Appeal to observe oral arguments in the case previously studied in the classroom. After oral argument, the students are introduced to the appellate court process firsthand, with an opportunity to interact with the justices and the attorneys. Founded in 2005, ACE is cosponsored by the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District; the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF); the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Appellate Courts Committee (ACC); and the California Academy of Appellate Lawyers (CAAL).

The cosponsors work together to administer and coordinate the program. This involves identifying the schools, recruiting volunteers, and providing supplemental funding for those schools that might not otherwise be able to participate because of transportation or teacher release time costs. Attorneys from the Los Angeles County Bar volunteer to conduct a classroom session, provide education about the judicial branch, and brief students about the case they will hear on their visit to the Court of Appeal. The next program will be this fall. Program administrators are currently exploring the addition of an evaluation tool to assess the program's impact.

Contact Laura Wesley at laura@crf-usa.org, 213-316-2128
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/courtsofappeal/2ndDistrict/ace.htm
www.crf-usa.org/law_government/ace/index.htm

California Supreme Court Public Outreach

Hundreds of California students attend the annual student outreach session of the California Supreme Court. This court program includes instructional materials for teachers, online legal briefs, and a live statewide broadcast of the oral arguments on important legal issues.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/educational.htm

www.calchannel.com

Judges and Attorneys Visiting Classrooms

Local courts throughout California participate in programs that bring judges and lawyers into local classrooms to talk with students and engage in mock trials and other learning experiences.

Superior Court of Los Angeles County, "Courtroom to Classroom"

Contact: Camilo Cruz, Superior Court of Los Angeles County, 213-974-5178

Superior Court of Orange County, Speaker's Bureau and online Student Resource Center

<http://education.occourts.org/home.asp>

Classrooms Visiting Courthouses, Mock Trial Competitions, and Law Day Events

A comprehensive model for courthouse/schoolroom interaction often uses a variety of programs tailored to different age groups. Students physically come to the courthouse and receive classroom-based curricula in some components. Regularly scheduled courthouse tours are offered for students in various grades. In the Justice 101 program, high school seniors participate with judicial officers in a discussion focusing on the very real and sometimes life-changing consequences that can occur when young adults make poor choices. In other programs, students participate in mock trials using age-appropriate materials and observe courtrooms in session. Youth Day in Court is an annual event at which students of all ages are given the opportunity to hear a variety of thought-provoking presentations on law-related topics. On My Honor provides a curriculum-based educational program that starts in the classroom and concludes with a visit to a courtroom. Also available throughout California is a broad range of formal Law Day educational programs with speakers and mock trial competitions for high school students.

Highlights in the Superior Court of San Diego County include:

- Courthouse tours
- Justice 101 program
- On My Honor program
- Youth Day in Court program
- San Diego County High School Mock Trial Competition

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Mentorship, Leadership, and Career Development Programs

Some courts have extensive volunteer, internship, and externship program that connects students to work opportunities in the court. Although the focus is on career development, the students get a great education through this program about how the court functions.

Superior Court of Los Angeles County volunteer/internship/externship program

www.lasuperiorcourt.org/OUTREACH/#VIEO

Superior Court of San Joaquin County Youth Leadership Academy

Contact: Judge Richard Vlavianos, Superior Court of San Joaquin County, 209-468-2827

K-12 Teachers

California On My Honor: Civics Institute for Teachers

In this professional development program, selected K–12 teachers from across California participate in a multiday civics institute focused on the judicial branch. Participants explore models of existing court- and law-related education curricula and programs, review current K–12 California civics standards, increase their knowledge of the role and operations of the state courts, and create unique lesson plans tailored for use in their own classrooms. This program is a collaboration between court staff and California State University at San Marcos, under the leadership of Dr. Fran Chadwick, Assistant Professor of Education, and is an expansion of a San Diego institute conducted in 2006. Participating teachers are recruited statewide through various channels, including court leadership, California Council for the Social Studies (teachers), and county offices of education.

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www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/cift.htm

College and Postcollege Programs

JusticeCorps

The JusticeCorps program recruits and trains undergraduate students to work as assistants in court-based self-help centers. Since the program began in 2004, nearly 600 students have been recruited and placed in self-help centers in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. This year, another new JusticeCorps program started in San Diego. Participating students are recruited from California State University and University of California system campuses and are a diverse group. Many are first-generation college students and are going on to law school or careers in court administration.

The program requires students to complete 300 hours of service, about 30–40 hours of which are spent in formal group or one-on-one on-site trainings. The formal training involves a two-day orientation to AmeriCorps programs and the courts, including an overview of the judicial branch and self-help legal access services in the courts. The students meet with site supervisors and get a primer in their specific subject matter area, whether it's family, housing, or small claims law. Other training includes more specialized areas of law, ethics, professionalism, how to deal with troubled litigants, disabilities awareness, and a Life After JusticeCorps event that is similar to a career day. The program is primarily funded through an AmeriCorps grant, with matching fund contributions from the AOC and local courts.

Contact: Nicole Claro-Quinn, AOC, 415-865-4504

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/justicecorps

Judicial Administration Fellowship Program

This program is administered by the Center for California Studies at Sacramento State University and cosponsored by the California Judicial Council. It is open to all people with a college degree, including recent graduates and midcareer applicants. Applicants should have a demonstrated interest in the judicial system and issues concerning the administration of justice in California courts.

Each year, 10 fellows are accepted into the 11-month program, which begins in September. The fellowship program is both academic and professional. On acceptance into the program, fellows will be enrolled as graduate students in public administration at Sacramento State and attend regularly scheduled academic seminars. Fellows serve as full-time professional staff in judicial branch offices.

Field assignments include placement in superior courts, appellate courts, and various divisions of the AOC. Fellows are paid a monthly stipend of \$1,972 and receive benefits.

www.csus.edu/calst/judicial

Additional Resource

What's Happening in Court?

This is an interactive book with fun activities and useful information to help children and their families who may be in court for any reason, whether they are visitors or witnesses or are involved in a case. Produced by the AOC's Center for Families, Children & the Courts, the book has been widely distributed to schools and courts in California and is available online in English and Spanish. *What's Happening in Court?* also has been reproduced by other state court systems.
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cab