

2023-2024 Annual Civics Outreach Report:

Building a Foundation of Civic
Literacy

Superior Court of California, County of Butte

History

Governance

In July 2013, the Power Democracy Steering Committee was formed with the purpose of overseeing the Task Force and implementing policies on civic education adopted by the Judicial Council. The Power of Democracy Steering Committee accepted the Task Force’s final report, “Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action,” released in August 2014. The report summarizes the need for civic engagement in the state and makes specific calls to action for improving civic education based on the Six Proven Practices in Civic Learning: classroom instruction in government, history, law and economics; service learning projects tied to the curriculum; simulations of democratic processes; extracurricular activities that have a strong civic dimension; student participation in school governance; and discussions of current events and controversial topics.

In keeping with the “Blueprint for Action” report’s call to action, Butte County was one of six pilot counties selected to create a local Civic Learning Partnership committee to develop and implement a plan for promoting civic learning locally. Formed in February 2015, the California Civic Learning Partnership (CCLP) of Butte County is a non-partisan committee initially led by Judge Kristen A. Lucena of Butte County Superior Court; Tim Taylor, Butte County Superintendent of Schools; and Jack Danielson, Regional Vice President of Horace Mann Companies. The formation of the CCLP of Butte County is a result of the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning established by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson. The purpose of the task force was to make recommendations to promote civic learning in schools with the ultimate goal of ensuring that all California students develop the civic literacy and values necessary to become active participants in the democratic process.

The Butte County Superior Court (BCSC) has continued to carry out Butte County CCLP’s mission to develop civic literacy and participation for all K-12 students through the integration of the Six Proven Practices in Civic Learning in classroom instruction and school culture. BCSC works towards this goal by providing civic learning models and resources that can be used by instructors and schools. Despite unprecedented challenges such as the 2018 Camp Fire and the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic, BCSC has remained steadfast in its goal and adapted to meet the changing needs of the community it serves. This was achieved by holding some scheduled events remotely during the Pandemic and reaching out to local schools to resume outreach programs and events, such as Judges in the Classroom and Leadership Luncheons, when Pandemic restrictions were lifted. This report outlines the outreach events held by Butte County Superior Court and Butte County schools during the August 2023 – May 2024 school year which exemplify the community’s resiliency and judiciary’s commitment to support local educators foster civic literacy and engagement in their classrooms.

Programs

The Butte County Superior Court’s ongoing partnership with Butte County Schools has led to the development of a number of outreach events and curriculum programs emphasizing civic education. The

CCLP of Butte County's current program offerings include mock trials, moot court, career fairs, Judges in the Classroom, and High School Leadership Luncheons. The success of these programs is highlighted not only by the number of events held, but also by the response of teachers and students who participated in these events.

"I TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN THE EFFORTS OF OUR JUDGES AND JUDICIAL OFFICERS WORK WITH THE YOUTH OF OUR COMMUNITY. OUR CITIZENRY WILL BENEFIT FROM STUDENTS WHO UNDERSTAND THE COURT'S ROLE IN OUR DEMOCRACY." *Hon. Michael Deems, Presiding Judge*



I. High School Mock Trials

Butte County Superior Court partners with the Butte County Office of Education (BCOE) under the direction of Superintendent Mary Sakuma to offer a mock trial program to local high school students each year. The mock trial event teaches students about the judicial branch and the legal process by providing an imitation of a real court trial. The trial setting allows students to play the roles legal professionals such as judges, attorneys, and court staff as well as the part of accused or witness with the goal of providing students with a deeper understanding of due process. This program partners with Teach Democracy (formerly Constitutional Rights Foundation) which creates new mock trial materials every year and holds state competitions in which Butte County Mock Trial winners compete with teams from other counties.

This year's Butte County Mock Trial Competition was held on February 22, 2024 at the Butte County Superior Courthouse in Oroville, CA. Participants from Las Plumas High School and Chico High School spent weeks prior to the event preparing the arguments and evidence for their respective cases with the help of volunteer coaches: Atty. Kathy Richards, Atty. Jeff Greer, Atty. Erika Romo, and Executive Director of the Public Defenders' Consortium, Nicole M. Diamond. Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger and Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez served as the judicial officers in the mock trials.



"THIS YEAR'S VOLUNTEER COACHES BROUGHT A WEALTH OF TRIAL EXPERIENCE TO THEIR MENTORSHIP. THE STUDENTS CLEARLY BENEFITED, AND THEIR PRESENTATIONS BECAME MORE REFINED OVER THE COURSE OF THE COMPETITION." *Hon. Tamara L. Mosbarger, Judge*

Students from both teams put their knowledge of the legal system to use and practiced their argumentation and public speaking skills during a spirited mock trial which culminated in the victory of the Las Plumas High School team. Figures 1-4 below show scenes from this year's event.



Figure 1: Chico High School students (left) and Las Plumas High School student (right) during the mock trial proceedings.

Figure 2: Two student participants from Chico High School and Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger.



Figure 3: Las Plumas High School Students (left) and Chico High student (right) participating in mock trial proceedings.





Figure 4: Group photo of Las Plumas High School (left) and Chico High School (right) from the 2024 mock trials held at Butte County Superior Court.

II. Law Day

Law Day, observed on May 1st, is a nation-wide commemoration of the significance of the rule of law in American society. In keeping with the spirit of national Law Day, Butte County Superior Court has developed a Law Day Program in which it partners with local elementary schools to offer a mock trial event appropriate for students in grade five. The Law Day Mock Trial Program makes the complex courtroom process accessible to an elementary school audience by having students participate in a courtroom play with a script written by local high school students.

Students are assigned specific courtroom roles including a judge, defense and prosecuting attorneys, bailiff, court clerk, defendant, witnesses, and jurors. Students with the roles of judge, court staff, and attorneys are paired with a local mentor who assists the child with reading their portion of the script and guides them through their role. On Law Day, participating classes take a field trip to the North Butte County Courthouse (NCCH) to take part in the mock trial. At the end of the event, the mentor Judge holds a question-and-answer session where students can ask questions about the legal system, courtroom practices, and pursuing careers in the legal field. Through this collaborative event, both high school students and elementary school students gain insight into the legal system and the impact of participation on the democratic process. The sections below further outline the successes of the three main components of the 2024 Law Day Event which are the Script Writers Program, Elementary School Mock Trial, and Justice Sayings Walking Tour.

1. Script Writers Program

The Script Writers Program is a six-week course in which five to ten students from various high schools have weekly writing sessions with a judicial officer with the goal of producing a finished script for the Elementary School Mock Trial held on Law Day. This year five students from Chico High School and Pleasant Valley High School participated in the Script Writers program. Judge Kristen A. Lucena, the mentor Judge, held weekly writing session with students with assistance from one of the court's Administrative Analysts, Catalina Carapia-Aguillon.

“THE SCRIPT WRITERS INTEGRATED LESSONS ON CRIMINAL PROCEDURE, EVIDENCE AND FAIRNESS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM. THEN THEY CAREFULLY CRAFTED DIRECT AND CROSS EXAMINATION QUESTIONS RESULTING IN A COHESIVE AND PROCEDURALLY ACCURATE SCRIPT. IT WAS EXHILARATING FOR THE SCRIPT WRITERS TO SEE THE YOUNGER STUDENTS PERFORM THE TRIAL.” *Hon Kristen A. Lucena, Judge*



During these sessions, students learned about California statutes, the legal process, and trial strategy from Judge Lucena while honing their writing skills through collaborative writing sessions with their peers. Sessions were held in the North Butte County Courthouse which provided students with a rare opportunity to tour a courtroom with a Judge, meet other judicial officers, and gain insight into the work of the court. Figures 5-7 below show this year's writers group in action.



Figure 5: Student writers performing a read-through of their Law Day Script with Judge Kristen A. Lucena.

Figure 6: Student writers putting the finishing touches to their script.





Figure 7: 2024 Script Writers group photo. From left to right: Kaylee Morehead, Denise Olmos Gutierrez, Athena Lee, Belal Abouesh, Lance Katigbak, and Judge Kristen A. Lucena.

2. Elementary School Mock Trial

The 2024 Law Day Elementary School Mock Trial was held on May 10th. A total of 55 students from two fifth grade classes participated in the event: Adrienne Jimmerson’s class from Parkview Elementary and Beth Geise’s class from Hooker Oak Elementary. This year’s mentors included Executive Director of the Public Defenders’ Consortium Nicole M. Diamond, Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey, and Judge Kristen A. Lucena. Students in both classes acted out their roles with the help of their mentors and had a dynamic question-and-answer session led by Judge Lucena. After the event, Hooker Oak students wrote letters to Law Day mentors and court staff to thank them for the event and share their impressions of the mock trial. One student wrote:

“Thank you for having me as a jur[or]. I learned that as a jur[or] my voice matters too. I also learned how the whole jury works. I would be really good as a jur[or] in a real trial.”

Another student shared the significance of being invited to the court for the event saying:

“I live in a foster home and doing this court thing was really helpful to teach me about being in court because in the future I’ll have to be in a court to choose if I can be home or if I can’t so thank you a lot for this moment and thank you for giving your time to me and letting me spend a day in court to learn.”

As these letters indicate, the experience of being invited into the courtroom is invaluable for young students in order to instill a sense of civic pride and duty. It also creates a sense of trust between the court and students who may be directly affected by its work in their own lives. Figures 8- 16 show scenes from the mock trial as well as additional excerpts of student thank you letters.



Figure 8: Student “attorneys” sit at the counsel table alongside their mentors D.A. Michael Ramsey and Public Defender Nicole Diamond with the “accused” student between them.



Figure 9: Student “witness” takes the stand during mock trial proceedings while the student “judge” “presides”, and student “clerk” administers the oath.

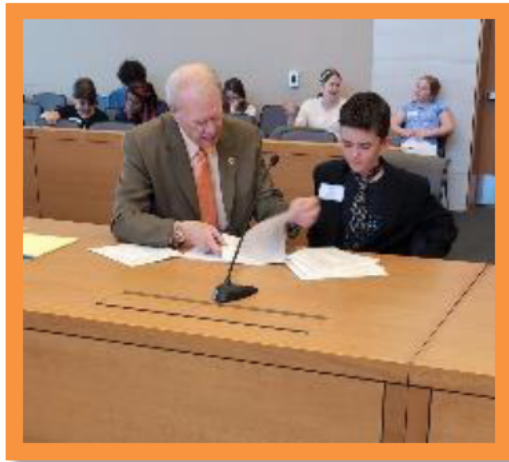


Figure 10: Student practices his lines with D.A. Michael Ramsey before the start of the mock trial

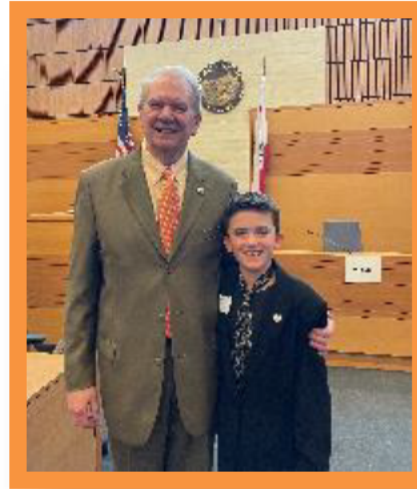


Figure 11: Student “prosecuting attorney” and Mr. Ramsey after the mock trial proceedings.

I just wanted to thank you so much for being my mentor. I really admire that you worked hard and that you are now the longest running elected District Attorney in the state of California. It shows that you really love your job to take time to work with kids. Even when I got stuck, you were so nice and helpful, I really appreciated that. You would make a great teacher Mr. Ramsey, and who knows maybe we will work together in the future.

I learned so many things working next to you. I learned that you should surprise the witnesses with questions, ones they have to take a minute to think about. I learned that the closing argument is more than speech, it's the last chance to convince the jury of your case. I didn't expect the courtroom to be so beautiful, in fact the whole court house is really beautiful. What a cool place to work

Figure 12: Excerpt from student thank you letter to Mr. Ramsey.



Figure 13: Student reviewing lines with Public Defender Nicole Diamond.

AGAIN THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME DO MY SCRIPT AND WHAT I SHOULD SAY. YOU ARE VERY HELPFUL AND NICE TO ME. I CAN SEE WHY YOU ARE A REAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY. YOU ARE GREAT AT TEACHING YOUNG KIDS LIKE ME TO BE SOMETHING LIKE YOU. YOU TAUGHT ME ALOT.

IT WAS FUN TO BE WITH A REAL LIFE DEFENSE ATTORNEY. MY FAVORITE THING THAT I LEARNED WAS HOW THE COURT WORKS, I NEVER KNEW THAT. I ALSO LEARNED WHAT THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY DOES DURING A TRIAL.

Figure 14: Excerpt from student thank you letter to Ms. Diamond.



Figure 15: Group photo of Hooker Oak Elementary School students with D.A. Michael Ramsey, Public Defender Nicole Diamond, and Judge Kristen A. Lucena.



Figure 16: Group photo of Parkview Elementary School students with D.A. Michael Ramsey, Public Defender Nicole Diamond, Judge Kristen A. Lucena, and script writers Belal Abouesh and Lance Katigbak.

3. Justice Sayings Walking Tour

In addition to the mock trial, Law Day students also took part in the Justice Sayings Walking Tour as part of their visit. Participating teachers showed a resounding interest in incorporating the activity into their Law Day field trip and classroom curriculum. The Justice Sayings Program encourages local schools to visit the North Butte County Courthouse in Chico and tour the facilities. During this tour, students search for a quote of their choosing from the seventy-five historic Justice Sayings located throughout the courthouse. This activity is accompanied by suggested teaching materials that are meant to compliment any instructors' civics curriculum. On Law Day, classes from Hooker Oak and Parkview Elementary enjoyed this self-guided tour after their mock trial. Hooker Oak Elementary students incorporated their chosen quotes into their thank you letters which served to demonstrate how this fun and simple activity can lead to thoughtful reflection on complex concepts surrounding Justice. Figures 17– 23 feature images of students enjoying the Justice Sayings walking Tour as well as a selection students' chosen quotes accompanied by their brief interpretation of their meaning.

"NOTHING IS TO BE PREFERRED BEFORE JUSTICE." – SOCRATES

I chose this quote because I believe justice should always go first and all things should be equal.

Figure 17: A student's interpretation of a quote from Socrates on the importance of Justice

Figure 18: Hooker Oak Elementary School Students intently etching their chosen quotes during the Justice Sayings Walking Tour.

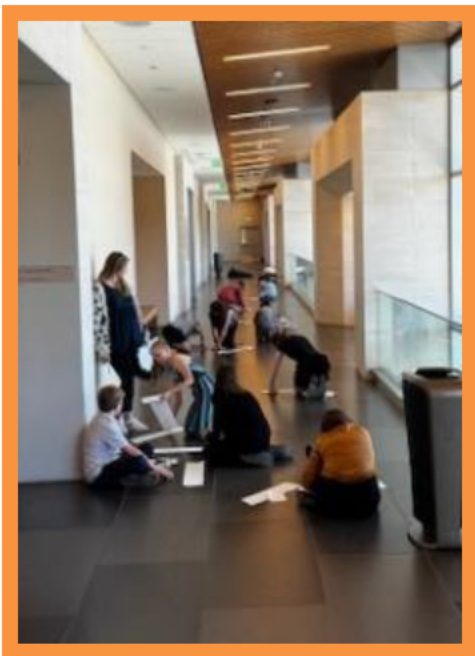


Figure 19: A student's thoughts on a quote by Mahatma Gandhi.

"NON-COOPERATION WITH EVIL IS AS MUCH A DUTY AS IS COOPERATION WITH GOOD." – MAHATMA GANDHI, A.D. 1922

I chose this quote because it's inspirational. This quote means that good and evil are both lurking.

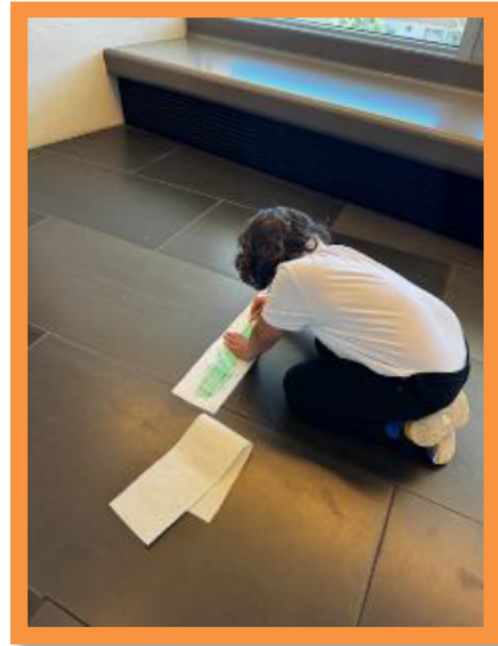
"THAT IT IS BETTER 100 GUILTY PERSONS SHOULD ESCAPE THAN THAT ONE INNOCENT PERSON SHOULD SUFFER."

-BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

I chose that quote because I think if I went to court and was proven guilty and didn't do it I should not sit in jail for the rest of my life. I would rather have 100 guilty people escape from jail!

Figure 20: Reflections on guilt and innocence from the mock trial's "accused" student.

Figure 21: Hooker Oak Elementary student etching a quote during the Justice Sayings Walking Tour.



This was my favorite quote "I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice" It was said by Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln said that because being a leader that forgives is better than being a strict leader who never forgives.

Figure 22: A student reflects on the nature of leadership.

Figure 23: A student's pithy summary of a line from The Declaration of Independence.

"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL." – THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
I think this means that all people should be treated equally in and out of the courtroom.

III. California State University, Chico's Community Legal Information Center Visits

California State University, Chico's (CSUC) Community Legal Information Clinic (CLIC) is a legal studies program within the Political Science and Criminal Justice Departments. By working under CLIC's supervising attorneys, the program provides paralegal practicum opportunities for students while also providing legal information to the community for over 50 years. CLIC conducts yearly education visits to BCSC to observe court calendars and participate in a question-and-answer session with a judicial officer. CLIC conducted two observation visits during the 2023/2024 school year. In October 2023, student observed an Unlawful Detainer Calendar and conducted a question-and-answer session with Judge Virginia L. Gingery. Though their observation, CLIC students gained valuable first-hand experience into what their clients encounter while going through the legal system.

IV. Moot Court

Each year, CSUC Political Science Department organizes a moot court competition. The Covid-19 Pandemic resulted in the 2020 competition being held virtually and the 2021 competition being canceled altogether. However, in-person competitions resumed in 2022 and the event has continued to thrive. During this rigorous competition, up to 32 teams of students present their arguments on a hypothetical scenario. Teams have one month to prepare an argument and appellate brief based on the citable authority and the factual scenario assigned. They then compete in a weeklong single elimination tournament where they present their arguments against other participating student teams and are scored on a variety of categories including sufficient legal support, logical progression of argument, and appropriate courtroom manner. Butte County Superior Court partners with CSUC's Director of the moot court program Director Maitreya Badami, JD to host a portion of the competition and the court's judicial officers have previously served as appellate court judges. The final arguments for the 2024 moot court were held on May 13th at the North Butte County Courthouse. Judge Michael P. Candela, Judge Clare Keithley, and Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger participated in this year's event.

“THESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
DEMONSTRATED A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING
OF THE APPLICABLE LAW AND NIMBLY
RESPONDED TO THE JUDGES’
INQUIRIES.” *Hon. Clare Keithley, Judge*



BCSC's partnership with CSUC on the moot court provides local university students with a unique opportunity to experience practicing law in a real courtroom setting and meet local judicial officers with the ultimate goal of inspiring them to continue their pursuit of Law related career. Figures 24- 27 show scenes from this year's moot court competition.

Figure 24: CSU Chico student presenting her argument during the 2024 Moot Court.



Figure 25: Judge Michael P. Candela, Judge Clare Keithley, and Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger during moot court proceedings.



Figure 26: CSU Chico students with Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger, Judge Michael P. Candela, and Judge Clare Keithley at the 2024 Moot Court.



Figure 27: CSU Chico student steps up to the podium during the 2024 Moot Court competition.

V. Career Fairs

In keeping with its mission of serving the community, the Butte County Superior Court regularly participates in career fair events at local schools. This year, the court attended two career fair events: the Second Annual Butte/Glenn 8th Grade Career Day on February 29th and the Chico Unified School District's (CUSD) Career Fair on April 17th. The court's visit to the Butte Glenn 8th Grade Career Fair held at the Glenn County Fairgrounds was a success as approximately 2000 students attended the event. The court provided fun activities such as word searches and trivia cards to spark student interest in law related career fields. Students also had the opportunity to speak with Judge A. Rodriguez about pursuing a career as a judicial officer. The CUSD's Career Fair event held at Pleasant Valley High School was equally impactful as it was the first time the event was held. The court was invited by the CUSD to participate and was able to provide insight into court careers to a district wide audience of high school students and their families. Figures 28 and 29 below show Jesus A. Rodriguez interacting with students at the Butte/Glenn 8th Grade Career Fair.



Figure 28: Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez greeting students at the BCSC booth at the Butte/Glenn 8th Grade Career Fair.



Figure 29: Judge Jesus A Rodriguez listening intently to 8th grade students at the Butte/Glenn Career Fair.

VI. Judges in the Classroom

The Judicial Council's Judges in the Classroom program (JIC) is a key part in advancing civics education in California and here in Butte County. The program pairs Judges with K-12 schools in their county to conduct individual classroom visits for teachers who request to participate. Since 2018, Butte County Superior Court has participated in the JIC program with the goal of informing local students about the role of the court in our governmental structure, constitutional due process, and the importance of fair access to the court system. Judicial officers use lesson plans such as "Salem Witch Trials", "No Vehicles Allowed", "The Constitution", and "The First Amendment" specifically designed to teach these complex concepts in an accessible and engaging manner. Judges are also encouraged to adapt these lessons by incorporating theatre style role-play and interactive games to increase student participation.

In her 2024 State of the Judiciary address, Chief Justice Patrica Guerrero included praise for the program saying,

“THROUGH OUR JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM PROGRAM, LAST YEAR WE SCHEDULED 230 VISITS BY JUDGES TO SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE, BOTH IN-PERSON AND REMOTELY. I’VE PARTICIPATED IN THIS PROGRAM MYSELF, AND CAN TELL YOU FIRST-HAND, THAT IT’S A TRULY REWARDING EXPERIENCE FOR THE JUDGES, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS.” *Hon. Patricia Guerrero, Chief Justice*

Justice Guerrero’s words are a powerful acknowledgement of the value that the JIC program brings to the community which resonates with the Butte County’s experience with the program. This echoes the feedback from teachers and students who participated in the program this year. Chico Junior High Teacher, Debbie Kidd said the following after her JIC visit: “Judge Rodriguez did an amazing job reviewing principles of the Constitution. In my mind, the biggest impact was his personal story. I believe many students could relate to him. What a great role model for our students. It is much needed.” Figure 30 below features a group photo of Judge Kristen A. Lucena with Golden Hill’s Elementary students during one of her Judges in the Classroom visits. Figures 31 – 38 include images from classroom visits and additional quotes from students.



Figure 30: Group photo of Judge Kristen A. Lucena with 5th graders at Golden Hills Elementary.

During the 2023-2024 school year, Butte County Superior Court visited at total of 13 schools county wide and conducted a total of 26 individual classroom visits reaching a total of 686 students as shown in Figure 31 below. This is an increase from the previous 2022-2023 school year during which 11 county schools were visited and there were 24 individual visits with 592 students reached. Repeated visits to classrooms each year indicate that once JIC visits are introduced to teachers, it becomes a recurring fixture in their curriculum. The sustained interest in the JIC program is shown in Figures 32-33 below. Additionally, Figure 34 includes instructions on how to request a JIC visit.

Figure 31: Judges in the Classroom Visits for the 2023-2024 School Year

School	Date	Teacher	Judge Assigned	Grade	Students
Biggs Elementary	9/13/2023	Heidi Cammack	Lucena	4 th	23
Biggs Elementary	10/24/2023	Tammie Loftin	Rodriguez	5 th	28
Cedarwood Elementary	5/22/2024	Jim Lewis	Gingery	6 th	27
Chico Junior High	1/22/2024	Debra Kidd	Rodriguez	8 th	37
Golden Hills Elementary	9/20/2023	Kristen Russell	Lucena	5 th	19
Hooker Oak Elementary	9/27/2023	Beth Geise	Lucena	5 th	27
Hooker Oak Elementary	4/9/2024	Lindsey Lundberg	Rodriguez	4 th	17
Little Chico Creek	9/6/2023	Kristen Thomas	Lucena	5 th	23
Little Chico Creek	9/12/2023	Seana Velasco	Rodriguez	5 th	25
Marigold Elementary	9/14/2023	Melissa Carriere	Heithecker	5 th	28
Marigold Elementary	9/21/2023	Ashley Palmer	Heithecker	5 th	29
Marigold Elementary	9/28/2023	Conrad Nystrom	Mosbarger	5 th	28
Paradise High School	11/8/2023	Matthew Sutter	Gingery	11 th	36
Paradise High School	4/16/2024	Matthew Sutter	Gingery	12 th	35
Paradise Ridge	10/11/2023	Laura Dalton	Gingery	5 th	29
Paradise Ridge	10/11/2023	Laura Dalton	Gingery	5 th	31
Parkview Elementary	9/18/2023	Mallory Alves	Gingery	2 nd	23
Parkview Elementary	2/9/2024	Emily Akimoto	Mosbarger	5 th	24
Parkview Elementary	4/5/2024	Adrienne Jimmerson	Lucena	5 th	28
Parkview Elementary	4/26/2024	Bailey Lawrence	Lucena	5 th	28
Shasta Elementary	10/18/2023	Jenny Cox	Lucena	5 th	32
Sierra Avenue Elementary	9/11/2023	Kristen Drake	Worley	5 th	24
Sierra Avenue Elementary	11/14/2023	Judy Yang	Rodriguez (Spanish)	5 th	17
Sierra View Elementary	9/8/2023	Whitney Toste	Rodriguez	5 th	22
Sierra View Elementary	10/5/2023	Gabe Mullins	Heithecker	5 th	23
Sierra View Elementary	3/26/2024	Julie Crum	Rodriguez	5 th	23
Total Students					686

“THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF OUR DEMOCRACY DEPEND UPON CITIZENS PARTICIPATING AS VOTERS, JURORS AND TAXPAYERS. THEY WILL MORE READILY EMBRACE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IF THEY UNDERSTAND THEIR IMPORTANT ROLE. THE JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM PROGRAM LAYS THE GROUNDWORK FOR TEACHERS TO CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION.” *Hon. Jesus Rodriguez, Judge*

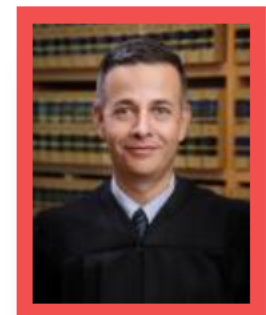


Figure 32: Number of Schools Visited by School Year

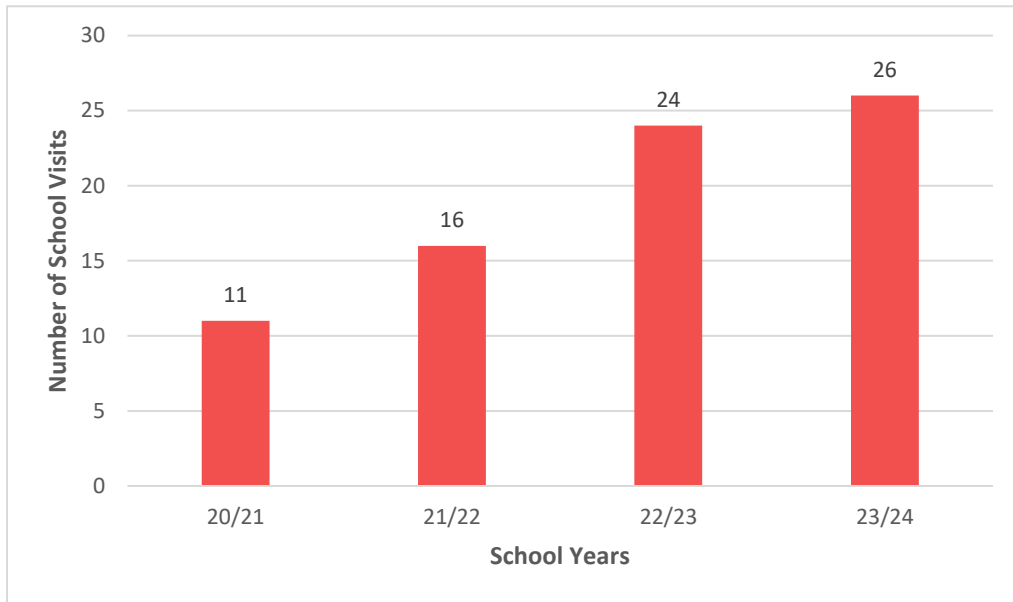


Figure 33: Number of Students Visited by School Year

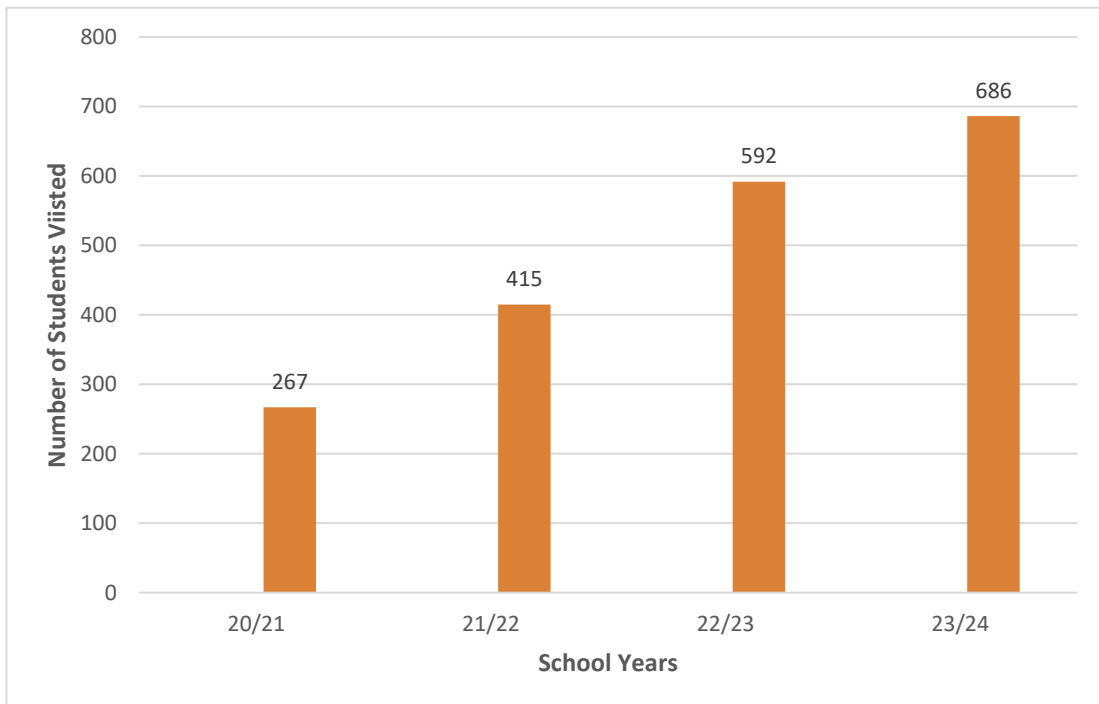


Figure 34: How to Request a Visit from a Judicial Officer

- 1) Review the available lesson plans and submit a request here:
<https://www.powerofdemocracy.org/judges-in-the-classroom>
- 2) Coordinate the visit: An Administrative Services Specialist will contact you once a volunteer has confirmed availability. Teachers will have the opportunity to discuss in advance the learning needs of the classroom.

Scan Me



Figure 35: Judge Phillip H. Heithecker teaching a lesson on the Constitution to a class of 5th grade students at Marigold Elementary.

“IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME TO GIVE BACK TO MY COMMUNITY. I TRULY ENJOY INTERACTING WITH AND SHARING MY LOVE OF THE LAW WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHILE VOLUNTEERING IN THE JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM PROGRAM.” *Hon. Virginia L. Gingery, Judge*

Figure 36: Quote from Hooker Oak Elementary Student.

“I think the video was great and has a lot of quotes and teaches us what is fair and what is not fair in the U.S.” - 5th Grade Student, Hooker Oak Elementary



Figure 37: Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez and 5th grade students from Sierra View Elementary.

Figure 38: Quote from Sierra View Elementary Student.

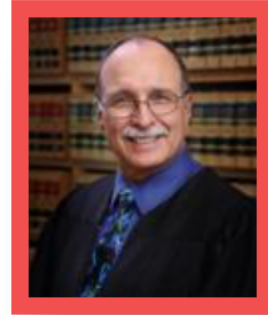
“I loved your presentation and think it was practically perfect!! Thank you for coming to my classroom and presenting! Students will love this. - 5th Grade Student, Sierra View Elementary

VII. High School Leadership Luncheons

The Leadership Luncheon Program, initiated by BCSC’s Judge Michael P. Candela, encourages local high school students to pursue leadership roles in government and related fields. Each year, BCSC partners with local high schools who select Senior students in good academic standing to attend a leadership luncheon event hosted by a BCSC Judicial Officer. Students are treated to lunch provided by a generous grant from the California Judges’ Foundation and have the opportunity to gain insight on pursuing careers in leadership from a judicial officer and prominent community members.

“THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PARTICIPATING STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY MENTORS IS GENUINE AND DYNAMIC. THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS NEVER CEASES TO INSPIRE ME.” *Hon.*

Michael P. Candela, Judge



During April and May 2024, the BCSC held six luncheons and had a total of eight local high schools participate in the program including: Gridley High School, Biggs High School, Durham High School, Paradise High School, Pleasant Valley High School, Chico High School, Las Plumas High School, Oroville High School. To decrease the burden of travel on participating students, the court held luncheons events in different locations throughout the area. Additionally, this year Judge’s partnered with 19 community leaders to speak at the luncheon events including the Butte County Sheriff, the Butte County District Attorney, a county supervisor, and a city councilman. The presence of these established local professionals is indicative of the resounding community support for the program and for local students who will one day serve in similar roles themselves. Figures 39–43 below feature students and group photos from this year’s Leadership Luncheon events.



Figure 39: Leadership Luncheon Group Photo. Biggs and Gridley High School students with Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez, and mentors: Commissioner Leah B. Sears, Commissioner Mark Emmons, and Public Defender Chris Carlos.



Figure 40: Leadership Luncheon Group Photo. Las Plumas and Oroville High School students with Judge Kimberly Merrifield and mentors Shelby Boston, Director of Employment and Social Services; D.A. Michael Ramsay; and Sheriff Kory L. Honea.

THE EXTRAORDINARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THESE OUTSTANDING STUDENTS ALWAYS IMPRESSES ME. IF THEY REPRESENT OUR FUTURE LEADERS WE ARE IN GOOD HANDS.” *Hon. Kimberly Merrifield, Assistant Presiding Judge*



Figure 41: Leadership Luncheon Group Photo. Chico High School students with Judge Michael P. Candela and mentors Leland McHatton, LMFT; Lt. Ben Love, Chico Police Department; and Commissioner Leah B. Sears.



Figure 42: Leadership Luncheon Group Photo. Paradise High School students with Judge Virginia L. Gingery.



Figure 43: Leadership Luncheon Group Photo. Pleasant Valley High School students with Judge Kristen A. Lucena and mentors Peter Durfee, District 2 Supervisor; James Stevens, NorthStar Partner; Attorney Mia Winter, Enloe Medical Center; and Kari Wheeler of Wheeler Ranch Realty Group.

Future Goals

I. Secure Increased Funding for High School Leadership Luncheons

With the rising cost of meal prices, exploring grant opportunities to provide additional funding for the Leadership Luncheon Program would allow the court to provide a uniform experience for all participants. Additional funding could also help expand participation to Academy for Change, Fair View High School, and Table Mountain School at Butte County Juvenile Hall. Students from these schools would benefit greatly from the opportunity to interact with judicial officers and local mentors by inspiring them take on leadership roles in their respective communities.

II. Expand Judges in the Classroom

By design, BCSC's Judges in the Classroom (JIC) program is currently offered to elementary schools, specially grade five. It is estimated that the court visits nearly half of all fifth-grade classes in Butte County. The opportunity to meet a judicial officer in a classroom setting is an invaluable experience that has a positive impact on young students. Thus, expanding the program to reach the remaining fifth grade classes in Butte County continues to be a long-term goal. The court hopes to accomplish this goal through increased marketing efforts to promote the program.

III. Civic Learning Award

The Civic Learning Awards provide recognition for California K-12 schools that demonstrate a commitment to civic learning opportunities for students. The program is led by the Power of Democracy Civic Learning Initiative and co-sponsored by Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond. The awards are part of a collaborative effort to promote Civics education statewide to K-12 students. To receive a Civic Learning Award, schools must demonstrate how they incorporate the six-research based proven practices into their curriculum. Butte County Schools have been awarded this recognition in previous

years. In 2016 and 2019 Pleasant Valley High School earned the award, and both Achieve Charter School and Little Chico Creek Elementary received the award in 2018. The court's goal is to assist Butte County schools to obtain this award again by helping them implement civics programs and assisting with the application process.

IV. State Seal of Civic Engagement

The State Seal of Civic Engagement is an award program that recognizes California high school seniors who excel in civics education and participation. Students who receive this award not only demonstrate a clear understanding of the Constitution, but also regularly participate in civic engagement projects in their community. The purpose of the award is to encourage students to become active participants in the democratic process. In 2024, the court expanded its Judges in the Classroom visits to include two high school classrooms. These visits support the civics engagement efforts promoted by the State Seal of Engagement awards, by motivating students to become civically involved. The court's goal is to continue expanding JIC visits to other local high schools and thus provide even more students with curriculum that inspires them to be civically minded community leaders.

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“CIVIC LEARNING TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPS SKILLS FOR THEIR FUTURE LIVES-SUCH AS CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING; IT TEACHES THEM HOW TO BE ENGAGED, TO COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND TO DEMONSTRATE CREATIVITY, INITIATIVE, AND INNOVATION.” *Hon. Patricia Guerrero, Chief Justice in her 2024 State of the Judiciary Address*