



2025-2026 Annual Civics Outreach Report: Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of our Nation

Superior Court of California, County of Butte

History



“THIS REPORT SHOWCASES THE VARIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVICS INSTRUCTION OUR JUDICIAL OFFICERS HAVE PROVIDED OVER THE COURSE OF THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR. THE MANY RICH INTERACTIONS WITH THE YOUTH OF OUR COMMUNITY ARE TRULY A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION, ESPECIALLY AS WE CELEBRATE THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR NATION.” *Hon. Jesus A. Rodriguez, Presiding Judge*

Governance

The Power Democracy Steering Committee was formed on July 2013 with the purpose of overseeing the Task Force and implementing policies on civic education adopted by the Judicial Council of California. 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 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 California Supreme Court 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. Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero highlighted the importance of promoting civics education in her 2024 State of the Judiciary Address:

“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*

Justice Guerrero's remarks on the importance of civic learning are especially poignant as this year marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence which codified the nation's values of liberty, equality, and justice. These values are not a guarantee, but rather a promise that the judicial branch has worked towards fulfilling since its inception. Butte County Superior Court (BCSC) is proud to be a part of this democratic legacy, and its outreach services are a seminal part of upholding our democracy by promoting civic literacy in the community. Each year, BCSC partners with local schools to provide civic learning models and resources that support further civics and history curricula. This year's report provides an overview of outreach events held by BCSC during the August 2025 – May 2026 school year and highlights the continued expansion of the court's programs such as Judges in the Classroom and the High School Leadership Luncheons. The court is honored to support the critical work of local educators as they prepare students to be civically engaged citizens and leaders who will safeguard the promise of democracy for generations to come.

Programs

BCSC offers a number of recurring outreach programs including: mock trials, moot court, career fairs, Judges in the Classroom, and High School Leadership Luncheons. In addition to these ongoing offerings, the Court's judicial officers also participate in various educational speaking engagements. This year, Butte County Superior Court was honored by the California Judges Association (CJA) through their Youth Civics Engagement Recognition Program for having one of the highest participation rates in youth civics engagement per judicial officer in the state. BCSC is grateful for this recognition and looks forward to continue serving the community through its civics education programs.

I. High School Mock Trials

Butte County Superior Court and the Butte County Office of Education (BCOE), under the direction of Superintendent Mary Sakuma, partner annually to organize and host a mock trial program for Butte County high school students. This immersive experience allows students to learn about the legal process firsthand by taking part in a real court trial simulation where they play the roles of legal professionals (e.g. judges, attorneys, and court staff) as well as the part of the accused or witnesses. The mock trial materials for this program are developed by Teach Democracy (formerly Constitutional Rights Foundation) which holds annual state competitions. Butte County Mock Trial winners compete with winning teams from other counties to develop a deeper understanding of due process.

The 2026 Butte County Mock Trial Competition was held on January 30, 2026 at the North Butte County Courthouse in Chico, CA. Participants from Las Plumas High School, Core Butte Charter, and Chico High School showcased their public speaking skills and impressed attendees with their knowledge of court proceedings. Students prepared their skillful arguments and evidence for weeks ahead of the competition with the help of this year's volunteer attorney coaches: Atty. Kathy Richards, Atty. Adam Sorrells, Atty. Julie McComb, Atty. Brendan Blake, and Executive Director of the Public Defenders' Consortium, Atty. Nicole M. Diamond. Students also had invaluable support from their volunteer teacher coaches: Casey Van Masis, David Loudermik, and Christine Henderson. Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger, Commissioner Leah B. Sears, and Commissioner Mark Emmons served as the judicial officers for this year's spirited competition which resulted in a victory for Chico High School who went on to compete in the California Mock Trial Competition in Oakland, CA. Photos from this year's High School Mock Trial Program are included below.



“THIS IS MY 19TH YEAR PRESIDING OVER THE HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIALS. EACH YEAR THE STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM EXCELLENT MENTORING FROM LOCAL ATTORNEYS AND THIS YEAR WAS NO EXCEPTION. THE STUDENTS DEVELOPED STRONG SPEAKING AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS WHICH ELEVATED THEIR PRESENTATIONS IN THE COURTROOM.” *Tamara L. Mosbarger, Judge*



Student witness takes the stand while Judge Tamara Mosbarger presides over the 2026 Butte County Mock Trial proceedings.



“I WAS DELIGHTED TO MEET WITH THE BUTTE COUNTY STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION AT THE BUTTE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT THIS YEAR. THEY SHOWED GREAT POISE AND WERE WELL PREPARED FOR THE SIMULATED TRIAL EXPERIENCE. WE ARE VERY PROUD OF ALL OF THE STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED, AND ESPECIALLY PROUD THAT CHICO HIGH SCHOOL REPRESENTED US AT THE STATE COMPETITION THIS YEAR.” *Mary Sakuma, Butte County Office of Education Superintendent*



Student attorney addresses the courtroom during this year's Butte County Mock Trial.



Chico High School students celebrate their victory alongside Executive Director of the Public Defenders' Consortium, Atty. Nicole M. Diamond, Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger, Commissioner Leah B. Sears, and Commissioner Mark Emmons.

II. Law Day

Law Day, observed annually on May 1st, is a national commemoration of the significance of the rule of law in the United States. Each year, BCSC partners with Butte County Elementary Schools to offer an annual Law Day Program in which the Court hosts a mock trial event for grade five students. Ahead of the event, local high school students work with a judicial officer to write a theatre style mock trial script that makes the nuanced concepts of the courtroom process accessible to a young audience. On the day of the Court's Law Day celebration, local elementary school classes visit the North Butte County Courthouse (NCCH) to participate in the mock trial play. Students are assigned specific roles including: judge, defense and prosecuting attorneys, bailiff, court clerk, defendant, witnesses, and jurors. Students with the roles of judge, attorneys, and court staff are paired with a judicial officer, local attorney, or a member of court staff who mentor students and guide them through their role in the court proceedings. The high school script writers are also invited to attend the event and see their work come to life as they assist student witnesses with their lines. After the mock trial proceedings, students participate in a question-and-answer session led by the mentor Judge where students have the opportunity to ask questions about the legal process and what it takes to pursue a career in the legal field. This program provides the opportunity for both the high school and elementary school participants to learn about the legal system in a dynamic and collaborative environment. The sections below provide additional details about the 2026 Law Day Event which included the Script Writers Program, Elementary School Mock Trial, and Justice Sayings Walking Tour.



“WITH THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR NATION IN MIND THE STUDENTS CRAFTED A SCRIPT AROUND A FIELD TRIP TO VISIT THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN WASHINGTON DC. THESE TALENTED WRITERS BROUGHT THEIR LOVE OF LIVE THEATER INTO THE SCRIPT INCLUDING A RAP FROM THE BROADWAY SHOW *HAMILTON*. WHAT IMPRESSED ME MOST WAS THE TECHNICAL LEGAL DETAILS THEY STROVE TO MASTER. IT IS EASY TO SEE ANY OF THESE YOUNG WOMEN HEADING OFF TO LAW SCHOOL IN A FEW SHORT YEARS.” *Hon. Kristen A. Lucena, Judge*



**This year's high school scriptwriters group
Cassidy McCraith, Abigail Perrin, and
Lauren Loomba.**



High school scriptwriters making meticulous edits to this year's Law Day Mock Trial script during the final read through.

1. Elementary School Mock Trial

The 2026 Law Day Elementary School Mock Trial was held on May 1st, and the Court issued a press release ahead of this date to formally announce the event. The Court hosted two fifth grade classes: Ms. Adrienne Jimmerson's class from Parkview Elementary in Chico, CA and Ms. Beth Geise from Hooker Oak Elementary in Chico, CA with a total of 55 students attending the event. 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. In keeping with this year's Law Day theme, "The Rule of Law and the American Dream," the mock trial script was centered around the Declaration of Independence. Students enjoyed dressing up in costume and reading their lines while enacting typical court proceedings with the help of their respective mentors. Both classes also engaged in an insightful discussions with the mentors immediately after the mock trial proceedings. The excitement of the students was captured by the Chico Enterprise-Record who featured the event in an article. Students also shared their impressions of the event in their thank you letters. One student wrote:

"I never knew that the jurors are how the court decides if someone is guilty. The mock trial was a great opportunity for me to learn more about how the courtroom works. I really appreciate being a juror." -5th Grade Student from Parkview Elementary



Parkview Elementary student "jurors."

This excerpt exemplifies the value of the Law Day Mock Trial as a tool for civics education. Students see classroom concepts, such as due process and civic duty, come to life during mock trial proceedings. Through this program, students come away with a critical understanding of how everyday citizens are an integral part of our democracy through the act of jury duty service. Working closely with mock trial mentors also creates a lasting impression on the students. Young participants have the opportunity to learn about what it takes to pursue a career in the legal profession, not only as a lawyer or a judicial officer, but also as a court clerk or a member of courtroom security. Experiencing each of these roles firsthand in an age-appropriate setting emphasizes that each role is important in carrying out the judicial process. Scenes from this year's Law Day Mock Trials are included below.

“One of the best parts of being a Trustee for CUSD is being invited to the amazing things in which teachers in the district have their students participate. One stellar example was the Celebration of Law Day on May 1st this year. Beth Geise, a 5th grade Hooker Oak Elementary School teacher, and Adrienne Jimmerson, a 5th grade Parkview Elementary School teacher, brought their classes to experience a trial setting at the Butte County Courthouse in Chico. Each teacher had 26 students participate in roles that included the plaintiff, the defendant, attorneys, the judge, court reporter, bailiff, witnesses and jurors. The fifth graders donned costumes and performed their roles reading scripts written by three CHS students: Abigail Perrin, Cassidy McCraith, and Lauren Loomis. It was a great example of teachers from three separate CUSD schools coordinating efforts to highlight the importance of civic engagement by engaging *their* students in a memorable day at the courthouse.” *-Teisha Hase, CUSD Board Member*



Costume clad student "witnesses" practice their lines with high school script writers before the start of the 2026 Law Day Mock Trial proceedings.



Judge Kristen A. Lucena and high school script writers Lauren Loomba, Cassidy McCraith, and Abigail Perrin strike a pose before the start of 2026 Law Day Mock Trial.



Student "witness" takes the stand while script writer Lauren Loomba follows along to assist with lines.



Judge Kristen A. Lucena poses for a photo with student "judge" after 2026 Law Day Mock Trial proceedings.



“Thank you dearly for this courtroom trip. I learned how a courtroom functions and how some of the jobs work. District Attorney Ramsey, thank you for helping me with my lines and when to speak and when not to. Thank you for teaching me how to be a prosecuting attorney. I might even be one someday.”
-5th Grade Student from Parkview Elementary

Student “prosecuting attorney” from Hooker Oak Elementary School and D.A. Michael Ramsey the mock trial proceedings.



“...The script was engaging and understandable and also used a plot that got gears turning in my head. ... Thank you for helping me broaden my horizons of what I want to do when I grow up. Defense attorney Diamond asked me questions about my personal life and experiences that made me feel special. Thank you all so much!”
-5th Grade Student from Parkview Elementary

Executive Director of the Public Defenders’ Consortium Nicole M. Diamond with student “defense attorney” from Hooker Oak Elementary School.



Group photo of Hooker Oak Elementary School students with D.A. Michael Ramsey, Executive Director of the Public Defenders' Consortium Nicole Diamond, Judge Kristen A. Lucena, and script writers Abigail Perrin, Cassidy McCraith, and Lauren Lomba.



Group photo of Parkview Elementary School students with D.A. Michael Ramsey, Executive Director of the Public Defenders' Consortium Nicole Diamond, Judge Kristen A. Lucena, and script writers Abigail Perrin, Cassidy McCraith, and Lauren Lomba.

2. Justice Sayings Walking Tour

The Justice Sayings Walking Tour encourages local schools to visit the North Butte County Courthouse in Chico. During this self-guided tour, elementary school students search for a quote of their choosing among the seventy-five Justice Sayings quotes located throughout the facilities. These quotes invite court visitors to reflect on the significance of justice in American society and can be especially useful for educators as they introduce complex civics concepts to young students. Participating teachers are provided with suggested teaching materials ahead of their courthouse visit, which they can adapt for their existing civics curriculum. This year, both Parkview and Hooker Oak Elementary students participated in this self-guided tour after their mock trial. Students and chaperones toured the courthouse searching for their chosen quotes and etching them on paper. This hands-on activity complemented the Law Day Mock Trial and provided an excellent way for teachers to begin a deeper conversation about justice and democratic principals in their classrooms. The following images feature highlights of students enjoying the Justice Sayings Walking Tour during their 2026 Law Day.



**Parkview Elementary excited to begin
their justice sayings etchings.**



**Hooker Oak Elementary
students etching their
chosen quotes.**



Group photo of Parkview Elementary School students showing off their justice quote etchings.



Group photo of Hooker Oak Elementary School students proudly displaying their colorful handiwork after their Justice Sayings Tour.

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



“MANY OF THE HEARINGS OBSERVED BY THE CLIC STUDENTS INVOLVE PRO PER LITIGANTS WHO OFTEN COME TO THE COURTHOUSE NERVOUS AND UNSURE OF TECHNICAL COURT PROCEDURES. AS A RESULT, I SPEND TIME EDUCATING THOSE LITIGANTS WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE LAW AND ETHICS. THE OBSERVING CLIC STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO SEE FIRSTHAND HOW THE COURTROOM IS RUN AND ARE MUCH BETTER PREPARED TO ASSIST THE CLIENTS THEY SEE AT THEIR CLINIC.” *Hon. Mark Emmons, Commissioner*

California State University, Chico's (CSUC) Community Legal information Clinic (CLIC) is a legal studies program within the Political Science and Criminal Justice Departments. For over 50 years, CLIC has provided legal information to the community by assisting pro per clients understand the legal system and identify the options available to them. They also provide paralegal practicum opportunities for students who work with CLIC's supervising attorneys. CLIC students visit BCSC each year to observe court calendars and participate in a question-and-answer session with a judicial officer. These visits are indispensable as they allow students to see firsthand what CLIC clients face as they navigate the legal system. The table below outlines the observation visits conducted by CLIC during the 2025/2026 school year.

CSUC's Community Legal Information Clinic Observation Visits for 2025/2026 School Year

Date	Courthouse	Calendar Type	Judicial Officer
10/15/2025	Butte County Courthouse	Misdemeanor	Judge Phillip H. Heithecker
11/1/2025	North Butte County Courthouse	Unlawful Detainer	Commissioner Mark Emmons
11/12/2025	Butte County Courthouse	RFO Family Law	Judge Clare Keithley
11/14/2025	North Butte County Courthouse	Small Claims	Judge Pro Tem Ashley Giusti
12/1/2025	North Butte County Courthouse	Civil Harassment	Commissioner Mark Emmons
12/12/2025	North Butte County Courthouse	Unlawful Detainer	Commissioner Mark Emmons
3/25/2026	Butte County Courthouse	Misdemeanor	Judge Ruby S. Neumann
4/11/2026	North Butte County Courthouse	Small Claims	Commissioner Mark Emmons
4/17/2026	North Butte County Courthouse	Small Claims	Judge Pro Tem Ashley Giusti

These observations provide a real-world component to the program's curriculum giving students a well-rounded legal education. For many students, these observations are their first time in a courtroom. Having the opportunity to not only observe a calendar, but also to speak with a judicial officer provides invaluable insight into the legal system. Such visits ultimately encourage the next generation of legal professionals to continue pursuing their career goals.

IV. California State University, Chico's Moot Court

Each year, the CSUC Political Science Department organizes a moot court competition where 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 student teams. Each team is rigorously scored on a variety of categories including sufficient legal support, logical progression of argument, and appropriate courtroom manner. This moot court model is based on what is used in law schools and undergraduate Moot Court Competition Nationals and affords students the opportunity to gain courtroom experience. The competition connects participants with local judicial officers who encourage them to continue their pursuit of a legal degree. BCSC works with CSUC's Director of the moot court program Maitreya Badami, JD each year to host a portion of the competition. The final round of arguments and the award ceremony for the 2026 CSUC Moot Court competition were held in the North Butte County Courthouse on May 7th. Judge Clare Keithley, Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez, and Judge Kimberly Merrifield served as this year's appellate court judges.



"IT WAS A PLEASURE TO PRESIDE OVER THE CSUC MOOT COURT COMPETITION WITH MY COLLEAGUES JUDGE KEITHLEY AND JUDGE RODRIGUEZ. THE ARGUMENTS WERE CAREFULLY REFINED BUT THE STUDENTS WERE SO WELL PREPARED THEY APTLY FIELDDED NUANCED QUESTIONS FROM THE COURT. THEY WERE QUITE IMPRESSIVE." *Hon. Kimberly Merrifield, Judge*

V. Speaking Engagements

In addition to the Court's regular outreach offerings, BCSC's judicial officers routinely participate in educational and professional speaking engagements for local organizations. Their participation in these events is indicative of the Court's mission of fostering community respect by taking a leadership role in the community. The following sections provide an overview of the speaking engagements BCSC's judicial officers participated in during the 2025-2026 School year.

1. American Board of Trial Advocates' Civility Matters Presentation

The Civility Matters program was created by the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) to elevate the standards of "integrity, honor, and courtesy in the legal profession." The program features lessons and experiences from ABOTA members promoting the values necessary to maintain high standards for the legal profession. To foster a uniformity in high standards, ABOTA chapters nationwide host Civility matters programs at law schools and other bar association events. On April 7, 2026 the Sacramento Valley ABOTA Chapter held a Civility Matters presentation at the Cal Northern School of Law. Judge Claire Keithley of Butte County Superior Court presented at this event along with other local lawyers who provided law students with valuable insights into professional conduct for legal professionals. During this event Judge Claire Keithley was presented with the ABOTA Appreciation Plaque in recognition of her consistent professionalism and participation in ABOTA events. Photos from this event are included below.



“ABOTA SERVES AS AN IMPORTANT PARTNER FOR THE COURT IN THE PROMOTION OF CIVICS EDUCATION. THIS GROUP OF LEGAL PROFESSIONALS HOLD AS THEIR CORE VALUES CIVILITY AND INTEGRITY; VALUES THE COURT LOOKS FOR IN THE LAWYERS APPEARING IN COURT.” *Hon. Clare Keithley, Judge*



Code of Professionalism

As a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, I shall

- Always remember that the practice of law is first and foremost a profession.
- Encourage respect for the law, the courts, and the right to trial by jury.
- Always remember that my word is my bond and honor my responsibilities to serve as an officer of the court and protector of individual rights.
- Contribute time and resources to public service, public education, charitable and pro bono activities in my community.
- Work with the other members of the bar, including judges, opposing counsel, and those whose practices are different from mine, to make our system of justice more accessible and responsive.
- Resolve matters and disputes expeditiously, without unnecessary expense, and through negotiation whenever possible.
- Keep my clients well-informed and involved in making decisions affecting them.
- Achieve and maintain proficiency in my practice and continue to expand my knowledge of the law.
- Be respectful in my conduct toward my adversaries.
- Honor the spirit and intent, as well as the requirements of applicable rules or codes of professional conduct and shall encourage others to do so.

In appreciation

Honorable Clare Keithley

April 7, 2026

Sacramento Valley Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates

**ABOTA Plaque Presented to
Judge Claire Keithley at this year's
Civility Matters Event.**



Atty. Michael T. Shepherd, Judge Claire Keithley, and Mr. Hansen at this year's Civility Matters Event.

2. Cal Northern School of Law Family Law Panel

Cal Northern School of Law holds a variety of events geared towards law students and local legal professionals. On April 24, 2026 Cal Northern held a Family Law Panel at the Cal Northern School of Law in Chico, CA. Judge Claire Keithley and Commissioner Mark Emmons of Butte Superior Court presented at this event along with local attorneys Atty. Miriam McNally, Atty. Kim Henderson, and Atty. Crista Benedict. Attendees greatly benefited from the speakers' wealth of knowledge in the area of family law.

3. California State University, Chico's Youth Civic Leadership Summit

The Youth Civic Leadership Summit was held on January 9, 2026 at California State University, Chico. The event was attended by approximately 250 high school students from Glenn County and Butte County. Judge Alicia Ekland of Glenn County Superior Court and Judge Kristen A. Lucena of Butte Superior Court presented on the independence of the judiciary. This year's Summit was a wonderful opportunity for these judicial officers to connect with local high school students and encourage them to pursue leadership roles in their community.



Judge Kristen A. Lucena and Pleasant Valley High School students at the 2026 Youth Civic Leadership Summit.

VI. Career Fairs

BCSC's Human Resources Division regularly attends career fairs at local K-12 schools and college campuses as part of its effort to build connections with the community. During the 2025-2026 school year, the Court had the pleasure of hosting a booth at the Butte/Glenn 8th-Grade Career Day on February 26, 2026. The event was held Glenn County Fairgrounds in Orland, CA and was attended by local 8th graders. Court staff provided engaging activities such as trivia games and a photo booth area where students could pose for photos as a judicial officer. The event was a great opportunity for BCSC staff to spark potential interest in legal careers including possible career opportunities at the Court with young students. Such events are significant because they allow BCSC staff to provide the community with insight into the work of the Court and invite young attendees to consider serving their community through work in the legal field.



H.R. Director Jacy Krogh at the 2026 Butte/Glenn 8th-Grade Career Day.

VII. Judges in the Classroom

The Judicial Council's Judges in the Classroom program (JIC) has been a tentpole program in BCSC's outreach offerings since 2018. The program is part of the judiciary's goal of advancing Civic education statewide and pairs judges with K-12 local schools to conduct individual classroom visits for teachers who request to participate. The teaching materials for these visits are provided by the Civic Learning Initiative's Power of Democracy and include lesson plans such as "The First Amendment," "No Vehicles Allowed," "Salem Witch Trials," and "The Constitution." These materials are specifically designed to make complex concepts accessible for students, and judges are encouraged to adapt these lessons by incorporating interactive games and theatre style role-play to increase student engagement. The goal of these visits is to teach students about the role of the court in governmental structure, the importance of impartiality in the court system, and due process. Last year, the Court expanded its JIC visits to local high schools, and the visits were so well received that judicial officers were invited to visit again during the 2025-2026 school year. The court conducted an additional JIC presentation for the College Connection students who are dually enrolled in a local high school and Butte College for their senior year.



Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez and Judge Kristen A. Lucena speaking to Chico High School Students.



Simulated jury selection featuring Chico High School Students on stage during their JIC visit by Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez and Judge Kristen A. Lucena.

The program also remains a fixture for elementary level classrooms where judicial officers conduct yearly visits at the teachers' request. This year the Court also hosted a 5th grade class from Plaza Elementary School in Orland, CA at the North Butte County Courthouse. Judge Ruby S. Neumann led students through "The Salem Witch Trials" lesson from the JIC curriculum. This unique experience allowed students to learn about due process in a real courtroom from an experienced Judicial Officer. Such visits showcase the flexibility of the JIC curriculum and demonstrate how easily these materials can be adapted outside of classroom. BCSC is excited at the prospect of offering additional "JIC in the Courtroom" visits in the coming years. During the 2025-2026 school year, BCSC visited a total of 12 schools across Butte County and conducted a total of 20 classroom visits reaching a total of 746 students as shown in the table below.



Judge Ruby S. Neumann with 5th graders from Plaza Elementary School pose for a courtroom photo.

Judges in the Classroom Visits for the 2025-2026 School Year

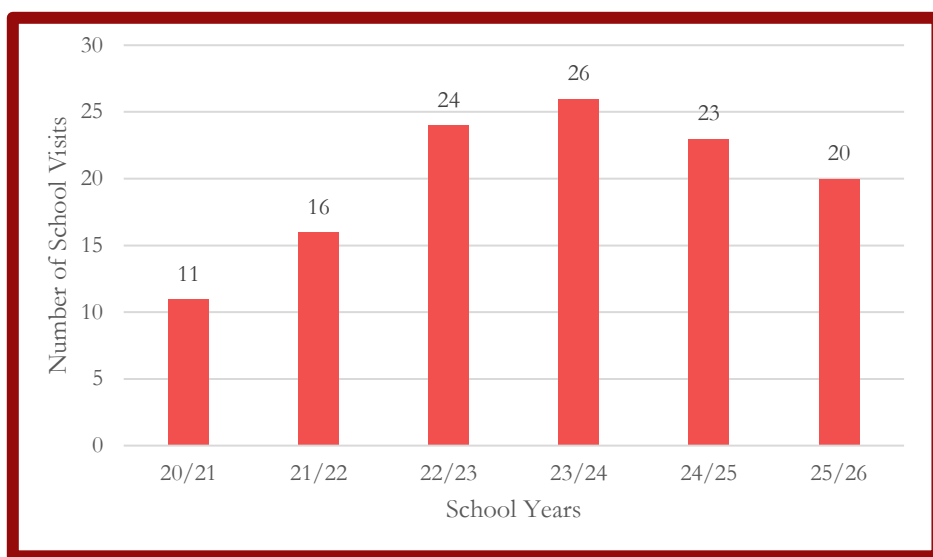
School	Visit Date	Teacher/Subject	Judicial Officer Assigned	Grade Level	Number of Students
Elementary Schools					
Parkview Elementary	9/12/2025	Rachelle Page	Judge Gingery	2nd	22
Parkview Elementary	9/19/2025	Mallory Alves	Judge Gingery	2nd	22
Little Chico Creek	10/17/2025	Kristen Thomas	Commissioner Sears	5th	28
Richvale Elementary	10/20/2025	Jill Pearson	Judge Rodriguez	3/4th	24
Achieve Charter School	10/22/2025	Kerri Laufer	Judge Gingery	5th	27
Marigold Elementary	10/29/2025	Melissa Carriere	Judge Lucena	5th	30
Marigold Elementary	10/29/2025	Emily McEnaney	Commissioner Emmons	5th	30
John McManus Elementary	10/30/2025	Ashley Palmer	Judge Merrifield	5th	30
John McManus Elementary	10/30/2025	Olivia Thayer	Judge Mosbarger	5th	30
Achieve Charter School	2/9/2026	Jimmy Alderson	Judge Rodriguez	6-8th	17
Little Chico Creek	2/20/2026	Seana Velasco	Judge Mosbarger	5th	28
Hooker Oak Elementary	3/11/2026	Beth Geise	Judge Lucena	5th	28
Parkview Elementary	3/27/2026	Adrienne Jimmerson	Judge Lucena	5th	27
Parkview Elementary	4/13/2026	Bailey Lawrence	Judge Neumann	5th	29
Plaza Elementary	5/14/2026	Gina Richardson	Judge Neumann	5th	25
High Schools					
Pleasant Valley High School	9/29/2025	Beth Burton	Judge Rodriguez/Judge Lucena	12th	105
Chico High School	10/13/2025	Kathyleen Bishop	Judge Rodriguez/Judge Lucena	12th	160
Paradise High School	10/14/2025	Matthew Sutter	Judge Gingery	12th	30
Paradise High School	3/23/2026	Matthew Sutter	Judge Gingery	11th	29
College Connection/ Butte College	5/5/2026	Kris Hahn	Judge Lucena	12th	25
Total Students					746

Although there was a decrease in the number of schools and students visited (per the charts below), the Court was happy to accommodate repeat visit requests from teachers. These repeat visits are indicative of the value of the JIC program to civics curriculum. BCSC is eager to continue working with local educators and to expand its visits to additional schools and student demographics. Scenes of this school year's JIC visits and instructions on how to request a visit from a judicial officer can be found below.

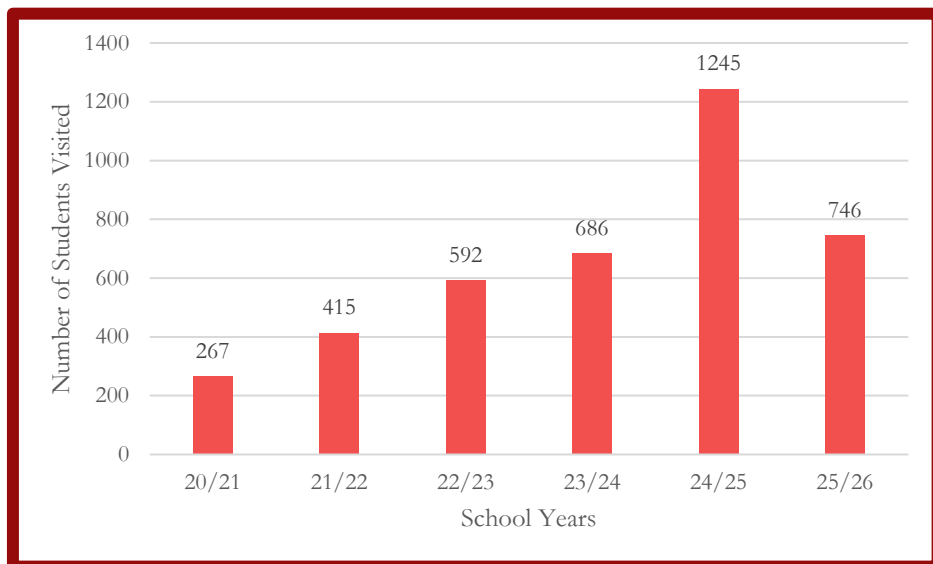


“THE JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM CURRICULUM PROVIDES TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY AT THE 5TH GRADE LEVEL, WITH A PLATFORM TO EXPLORE AGE APPROPRIATE HISTORICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL CONCEPTS AROUND THE FORMATION OF OUR COUNTRY, COLONIALISM, STATES RIGHTS AND FEDERAL RIGHTS, DUTIES AS A CITIZEN, AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS INCLUDING CRITICAL TRIAL RIGHTS. WHEN JUDGES PRESENT THESE ISSUES IN AN INTERACTIVE MANNER YOU SEE THE LIGHT BULB GO ON FOR THESE KIDS. I’M HONORED TO BE INVITED TO SHARE MY LOVE OF THE LAW AND HISTORY WITH THEM.” *Hon. Virginia L. Gingery, Judge*

Number of School Visits by School Year



Number of Students Visited by School Year





Group photo of Judge Virginia L. Gingery with 5th graders at Achieve Charter School.



Group photo of Commissioner Leah B. Sears with 5th graders at Little Chico Creek Elementary School.



Group photo of Judge Ruby S. Neumann with 5th graders at Parkview Elementary School.



“JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM BRINGS OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS TO LIFE FOR STUDENTS. WATCHING FIFTH GRADERS RECOGNIZE WHY A FAIR TRIAL REQUIRES A JURY, AN ATTORNEY, AND THE ABILITY TO CHALLENGE EVIDENCE IS INCREDIBLY REWARDING UTILIZING THE EXCELLENT TOOL OF THE SALEM WITCH TRIAL JIC CURRICULUM. IT IS A POWERFUL REMINDER THAT THE NEXT GENERATION OF CITIZENS QUICKLY GRASP THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR BILL OF RIGHTS AND THE THEORETICAL BECOMES TANGIBLE.”

Hon. Ruby S. Neumann, Judge



Group photo of Judge Kimberly Merrifield with 5th graders at Marigold Elementary School.



Group photo of Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger with 5th graders at Little Chico Creek Elementary School.



Group photo of Judge Kristen A. Lucena with 5th graders at Parkview Elementary School.

How to Request a Visit from a Judicial Officer

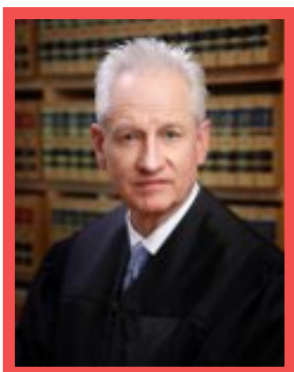
- 1) **Review the available lesson plans and submit a request here:**
<https://www.powerofdemocracy.org/judges-in-the-classroom> or scan the QR Code
- 2) **Coordinate the visit:** An Administrative Services Specialist will contact you once a volunteer has confirmed availability. Teachers will have the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



VIII. High School Leadership Luncheons

BCSC's Leadership Luncheon Program was initiated by Judge Michael P. Candela in 2011. Since then, the program has remained a regular offering among the Court's outreach programs. The Leadership Luncheon Program seeks to encourage Butte County high school students to pursue careers in law, government, and become leaders in their community. Each year, BCSC partners with local high schools to invite exceptional senior students to attend a leadership luncheon event hosted by a BCSC judicial officer. Thanks to a generous grant provided by the California Judges' Foundation, the Court is able to treat students to lunch with judicial officers and other prominent community leaders. The luncheons allow students to spend one-on-one time with local business owners and legal professionals to discuss career interests and build connections as they share a meal. These events are intended to celebrate students' accomplishments and inspire them to continue pursuing their professional goals.

This year BCSC partnered with eight high schools for the Leadership Luncheon Program including: Oroville High school, Las Plumas High School, Pleasant Valley High School, Chico High School, Paradise High School, Durham High School, Fair View High School, and Prospect High School. Hosting a luncheon for Prospect High School was one of the court's previous goals which BCSC was proud to achieve and celebrate the accomplishments of hardworking Prospect High students this year. The court also partnered with 35 mentors who attended this year's luncheon events including: the Butte County District Attorney, the Mayor of Chico, the Butte County Sheriff, legal professionals, and local business owners. Their attendance at these events was crucial to the program's success and provided a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about exciting career paths. The table below outlines this year's leadership luncheon events and the accompanying photos feature attendees with judges and mentors.



"AS I REFLECT ON THE EASY BACK AND FORTH OF THE DIALOGUE AT THE LUNCHEON THIS YEAR, I REALIZED I GOT JUST AS MUCH OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE AS THE STUDENTS. THEY INSPIRE ME."

Hon. Phillip H. Heitbecker, Judge

Leadership Luncheon Events for the 2025-2026 School Year

School(s)	Date	Judge	Mentors
Durham High School	03/26/26	Judge Mosbarger	Mr. Steven Heithecker, Business Owner of Heithecker Financial Commissioner Mark Emmons, BCSC Mr. Jaime McElhinney, Chico Police Officer Ms. Lisa Almaguer, Butte Public Health Information Officer Ms. Lilia Diaz, BCSC Judicial Fellow
Paradise High School	04/30/26	Judge Gingery	Chief Eric Reinbold, Paradise Chief of Police Mr. Richard Gingery Jr., Vice President of Board of Trustees PUSD Mr. Steve Crowder, Mayor Town of Paradise Ms. Linda Horton Lyons, Restaurant Owner Ms. Lilia Diaz, BCSC Judicial Fellow
Oroville H.S. / Las Plumas H.S.	05/08/26	Commissioner Sears	Mr. Michael Ramsey, Butte County District Attorney Ms. Nicole Diamond, Executive Director of Public Defender Consortium Ms. Sophia Parson, District Attorney Investigator
Prospect High School	05/11/26	Judge Neumann	Mr. Kasey Boone, Owner, Boone Feed & Supply Ms. Sarah Pierce, Teacher/Coach Oroville Orcas Swim Team Mr. Richardo Stegar, Supervisor, Butte County Probation Lt. Travis Johnson, Oroville Police Department Ms. Marisela Preciado, Victim Witness Advocate, Butte County DA Office
Fair View High School	05/22/26	Judge Rodriguez	Mr. Kevin Wilkerson, Head Coach Hamilton High School
Pleasant Valley High School	4/17/2026	Judge Lucena	Judge Ruby S. Neumann, BCSC Mr. Dan Nugent, Retired General Counsel, Nestle Ms. Michelle Power, COO, Healthy Rural CA Sherrif Kory Honea, Butte County Sheriff Mr. Matt Galloway, Russell Galloway Associates
Chico High School	4/29/2026	Judge Heithecker	Dr. Heidi Houlihan MD, Chico Eye Center Ms. Nell Weast, Physical Therapist Enloe Mr. Mike Wolcott, Editor Chico E.R. Mr. Greg Debord, Financial Advisor Ms. Erin Osborn, CPA Parkside CPA and Consultants



“AS THE MENTORS AND I SAT AROUND THE TABLE SHARING OUR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS WITH THESE OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, WE WERE REMINDED OF THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP AND CONNECTION AND LEFT WITH SO MUCH HOPE BECAUSE OF THE FUTURE THESE STUDENTS REPRESENT.” *Hon. Leah B. Sears, Commissioner*



Group photo of Pleasant Valley High School students with Judge Kristen A. Lucena and mentors: Sheriff Kory Honea, Dan Nugent, Matt Galloway Michelle Power, and Judge Ruby S. Neumann.



Group Photo of Oroville & Las Plumas High School students with Commissioner Leah B. Sears and mentors: Mike Ramsey, Sophia Parsons, Nicole Diamond, Kristen Wiedenman, Ryan Vercruysse.



Group photo of Fair View High School students with Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez and Mr. Kevin Wilkerson.



Group photo of Durham High School students with Judge Tamara L. Mosbarger, and mentors: Steven Heithecker, Commissioner Mark Emmons, Jaime McElhinney, Lisa Almaguer, and Lilia Diaz.



Group photo of Chico High School students with Judge Phillip H. Heithecker and mentors: Heidi Houlihan MD, Nell Weast, Mike Wolcott, Greg Debord, and Erin Osborn.

IX. Additional Courthouse Visits

In addition to the Court's regular outreach offerings, BCSC also coordinates with interested teachers to conduct courthouse visits. This year, the Court hosted two 8th grade classes from Hamilton Middle School on 3/16/26 and 3/23/26 at the North Butte County Courthouse. During both visits Judge Jesus A. Rodriguez spoke with students. The classes also observed Commissioner Mark Emmons' Civil Harassment calendar followed by question-and-answer session. These visits offer students a rare insight into court proceedings, and BCSC hopes to continue hosting such visits in the years to come.

Acknowledgements

The Superior Court of California, County of Butte would like to sincerely thank all those involved in making the events listed in this report possible. A special thanks to the Butte County Office of Education, the Judicial Council of California, California State University of Chico, the judicial officers of the Butte County Superior Court, the Administrative Services Division of the Butte County Superior Court, participating teachers, students, mentors, justice partners and the Butte County Bar Association.