



October/November 2012



ILLINOIS STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION

LAW-RELATED EDUCATION

The Newsletter of the ISBA's Committee on Law-Related Education

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ILLINOIS LRE NEWS!!

HINSDALE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL - Congratulations to Hinsdale Central High School; they placed 9th at the National High School Mock Trial Championships in Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 3-6, 2012. Wow!!!

2013 HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL PROGRAM UPDATE

It appears that the 2013 Mock Trials will take place at the **University of Illinois in Champaign - Saturday, March 2 and Sunday, March 3, 2013.** Marley Nelson, Head Coach of the Illinois Trial Team will be administering the program along with the assistance of the ISBA and the Law-Related Education Committee.

More details will be posted on the ISBA website as they become available

<http://www.isba.org/teachers/mocktrial>.



CIVICS IN ACTION

SHAWNEE HIGH SCHOOL

Should our schools develop future community leaders and active citizens who will make a difference? Shawnee High School, headquartered in Union County in far Southern Illinois, is doing just that. Its students investigated a local issue, brought together local, state and federal officials, found solutions, and then the students helped raise \$100,000 toward a solution. The school has only 160 students, 65% of whom are low income, and one teacher, Jamie Nash-Mayberry, for all its social studies courses, but it is preparing youth to be active citizens and community leaders.

Two years ago, their teacher made the students aware of potential flooding of homes, farm land and other properties due to the deteriorating levees surrounding their communities. The students devoted about one class day a week over two years to studying this issue. They consulted experts from the Corps of Engineers. Southern Illinois University and local and state officials. The students invited their state and federal legislators to hold a summit in the community to address the flooding problem and when the summit seemed delayed, they wrote Oprah Winfrey asking her help. While Oprah did not respond, the students' letters attracted press attention. After the story appeared in local newspaper and on the local television, the legislators set the summit date. Eventually, the summit produced some potential solutions and some grants. When the local levee commissioners needed help securing their portion of funding for a new drainage system, they came to the students. The students tapped into the resources they had developed and were able to help the levee district secure the needed \$100,000 in funding. The students, working with the art department, also designed and sold T-shirts with the funds going to the levee district. The school district recently honored the students and their teacher for their contributions to the community.

These students learned the need to keep public officials informed of local problems, the willingness of these officials to respond, and the difference that collective citizen advocacy can make. To know whom to contact, these students had to learn the roles of the various branches of government and the interplay among local, state and federal officials. To be effective, these students conducted original research, gathered and processed information, thought critically,



spoke and wrote persuasively, and collaborated and worked as a team. The students also learned the power of the media to highlight an issue as well as the limits of the media when it gets the facts wrong. Their teacher reports that they experienced the value of “giving back” to their communities. These students possess the knowledge, skills, and civic dispositions necessary for effective citizenship.

There are many models for involving students in becoming effective citizens and we will feature some of those in the following months. Ms. Mayberry and Shawnee High School met the challenge of teaching citizenship with nothing more than a creative teacher, a supportive administration, willing students, and a few hundred dollars for one field trip. This school is fulfilling its mission “that all students acquire and use knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to become productive and successful members of society.” (www.shawneedistrict84)

FINANCIAL LITERACY

LEWIS SCHOOL

The recent mortgage and banking crises and the large amount of credit card debt has many citizens in financial and legal difficulty. How do we prevent the bleeding? How do we educate citizens to avoid ill-advised risks?

The students in the Gifted Program at Lewis School in Carbondale IL are becoming financially literate. These fourth and fifth graders spend one semester of the two-year program learning business. After learning about various types of financial investments, including the stock market, the youngsters select an investment portfolio for (a virtual) \$2500, follow their investment and report on their success or failure.

To better understand business, the students also conceive, design, and produce a product. Products include pet pillows, back pack decorations, cards with photos of nature scenes, and hand-decorated frames, among others. At a spring community-based farmer’s market, the students sell their product. Finally, the students prepare a report on the success or failure of their product.

These youngsters come to appreciate the role of saving, the workings of the private capital system, including the stock market, and the risks of loss. They understand the role involved in



being an entrepreneur, the role of business in our society, and the role of marketing. Again, they appreciate the risks of loss as well as the benefits of success.

Their teacher, Betsy Brown, reports that 4th and 5th grade students are capable of learning material beyond what is part of the traditional curriculum. Ms. Brown has created the curriculum from public documents and community experts. This program works due to a creative teacher, supportive administrators and parents, and excited and engaged students. As result of these experiences, these students should be better informed and more discriminating consumers and investors.

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| YOUTH COURTS: A PRACTICAL SOLUTION TO A RISING PROBLEM |
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Youth Courts: A Practical Solution to a Rising Problem

“Tell me, and I’ll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I’ll understand.” –Unknown

When we see the headlines in newspapers about young people committing adult-like crimes we often brush it off, not taking into consideration what an appropriate punishment may be for young people. Youth courts provide a practical solution for handling first time juvenile offenders. By involving the offender, her classmates and the community youth court lives up to the saying “it takes a village to raise a child.”

Youth Court is one of the fastest growing youth diversion programs in the nation. Established to keep young people out of the juvenile court system, youth court’s give juvenile offenders a second chance to maintain a clean criminal record, school misconduct record and keep points off of their drivers license. The Office of the Illinois Attorney General established the Illinois Youth Court Association in 2000. Since then, over 30 separate youth courts have been established. Youth courts can handle actual minor criminal offenses or be used as a disciplinary tool to handle violations of school rules. Youth courts provide an excellent opportunity to positively impact the young people of Illinois while also educating youth offenders and their communities about the legal system.

What makes Youth Court effective?

Positive peer pressure is the driving force behind the results in youth court proceedings. Youth courts turn peer pressure into a positive tool: the youth volunteers, who represent the respondent’s community, explain to the respondent why their behavior was inappropriate and what penalties are associated with this poor behavior. However, the underlying philosophy of youth courts is not merely to punish youths. Instead, the volunteers work through creative ways to have respondents understand that their behavior has harmed others and the community. To further assist the respondent in understanding his offense, respondents are provided ways to fix the damage **that** they caused. Specific needs of respondents are identified and the disposition is directed at building competencies in them. For example, a juvenile who has committed vandalism may be sentenced to community service hours cleaning up his community. This full circle approach ensures that respondents fully understand the weight of their actions. It also helps the offender reenter his community with a feeling of pride and accomplishment.



What are the mechanics of youth court?

Although each youth court will function differently depending on the needs of the community, a typical youth court proceeding begins with the offender admitting guilt and volunteering to partake in a youth court hearing. Youth court hearings are conducted in a manner similar to traditional court proceedings. All participants take an oath of confidentiality. Student lawyers then make opening statements, introductions, and arguments. Volunteer jurors, lawyers, and judges are permitted to ask questions during the hearing. Once all arguments have been made, student jurors deliberate and structure a disposition.

Dispositions in youth court cases are thus made by a jury of the offender's peers. This allows for positive alternative sanctions for first-time offenders as opposed to jail time or fines. Sentences imposed by youth courts require young people to take responsibility, be held accountable, and make restitution. A common part of the disposition requires respondents to serve on a youth court jury near the end of their sentence. Requiring offenders to volunteer in youth court proceedings ensures that they feel welcomed back into their communities. Further, offenders are given the opportunity to better understand their punishment through participating in the sentencing decision making process of another student. Also, including students who have previously been disciplined in youth court allows for a diverse jury of offenders and non offenders.

Of course there will be occasions where an offender is unable carry out the terms of his sentence. Failure to complete the requirements set forth in a particular disposition will generally result in referral back to the original referring agency. For example, juvenile offenders may be referred back to juvenile court and students who violated school guidelines could be referred back to the traditional school disciplinary process.

Why should you implement a youth court in your school?

- Expanding youth courts is an effective strategy for reducing juvenile delinquency, allowing young people to take responsibility for their actions, benefit their communities and learn community engagement skills.
- Youth court provides young people with the opportunity to engage in active learning experiences that allow them to explore their individual legal rights, participate in dispute resolution, and immerse themselves in critical thinking. Through participating in these activities, students gain an invaluable skill set: the ability to analyze information, problem- solve, and understand how to properly conduct themselves in the legal system.
- In the classroom youth court can be an excellent tool for career planning. While participating in youth court, students have the opportunity to research the duties and obligations of law enforcement professionals, attorneys, clerks, bailiffs, jurors, and judges.
- The National Association of Youth Courts reports that young people participating in youth court as respondents and volunteers have improved attitudes toward authority and have increased knowledge of the justice system. These are traditional goals of law-related education.

How can you get started?



Starting a youth court requires great enthusiasm and devotion from the entire community. Establishing a committee devoted to implementing a youth court in your community is the first step. This committee will be responsible for researching which youth court model best fits your community, developing relationships with the legal community and referral agencies and recruiting volunteers. The Illinois Attorney General and National Youth Court Association are both excellent resources for information on starting a youth court.¹

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HOT TOPICS

REGISTER FOR CRFC'S ILLINOIS LRE CONFERENCE 2012 ILLINOIS LAW-RELATED EDUCATION CONFERENCE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 8:30 AM HAMBURGER UNIVERSITY & HYATT LODGE

Date: Friday, October 26, 2012 - 8:30am
Audience Type: High School Teachers

Democracy on Trial

Audience: High School Teachers, Middle School Teachers, Policy Makers, Researchers, General Public

Location: [Hamburger University & The Hyatt Lodge](#)
2715 Jorie Boulevard
Oak Brook, IL 60523

What challenges do Americans see in each other, their communities, and their government? Are these challenges unique to our time or are they inherent in the nature of democracy itself? From The Tea Party to Occupy Wall Street, is our "Democracy on Trial"? The 2012 Illinois Law-Related Education conference addresses the tensions that define modern American life. It offers resources for the current 2012 election and enduring questions of American society. It is a place for Illinois educators to discuss how we can teach students about the promise and trials facing our Republic.

¹ Information contained in this essay, and information regarding how to implement a youth program in your school can be found at:

- 1.) National Youth Court Organization: www.yourthcourt.net
- 2.) Illinois Attorney General: <http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/communities/youthadvocacy/iyca.html>



The conference features dynamic workshops with nationally recognized presenters on legal and political issues, interactive teaching methods, and innovative materials for the classroom. This is an excellent opportunity to share experiences, best practices, teaching strategies, and curriculum with your colleagues; and join in a statewide conversation about the issues.

Keynote

Betsy Sinclair, a political scientist from the University of Chicago and author of, [*The Social Citizen*](#), will keynote the 2012 Illinois Law-related Education Conference. Her book, *The Social Citizen*, examines how our sociability shapes our behaviors as citizens. Using survey data as diverse as the wealthy suburbs in Illinois to the streets of South Los Angeles, she identifies the social influences that underlie a variety of political activities ranging from voter turnout to political contributions and the implications they have for the democratic process.

2012 Teachers of the Year

The 2012 Barbara J. O'Donnell and Edward J. Lewis Awards for Illinois Law-Related Education Teachers of the Year will be presented at the conference. To learn more about these awards or to nominate a teacher, [click here](#).

Register Now at <http://www.crfc.org/2012stateconference>

ISBA LAW-RELATED EDUCATION COMMITTEE PAMPHLETS ONLINE

Becoming an Adult

<http://www.isba.org/sites/default/files/teachers/publications/Becoming%20an%20Adult.pdf>

Kids and the Law: An A-to-Z Guide for Parents

<http://www.isba.org/sites/default/files/teachers/publications/Kids%20and%20the%20Law.pdf>

The Illinois State Bar Association's Law-Related Education Newsletter is provided free of charge on a quarterly basis during the school year. We are dedicated to promoting law-related education resources and discussion topics appropriate for use in classroom or community settings. If you do NOT wish to receive this complimentary newsletter, please reply and indicate in the message line that you wish to be removed from our mailing list.

- *Current subscribers: If your e-mail changes, please let us know. And, please feel free to forward this publication to others who may be interested.*
- *Note: The Illinois State Bar Association's Standing Committee on Law-Related Education for the Public does not share or sell its mailing list.*

This and other editions of the ISBA's LRE Newsletter are available on-line at <http://www.isba.org/Sections/lrenewshome.html>



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