

High School Mock Trial



between seven and 18 students. Teams try each year's fictitious case against other teams at district competitions in February, and the top teams compete at the state championship in March. The South Carolina high school mock trial champion team represents South Carolina at the national championship in May, and that competition is held in a different state each year. The South Carolina Bar and Bar Foundation provide funding to support the winning team's trip to the national competition.

All participants are encouraged to keep in mind that the goal of the mock trial program is not to win for the sake of winning, but to learn and understand the meaning of good citizenship in a democracy through participation in our system of law and justice.

Materials

A new fictional case is made available every year to participating teams. The cases are written or adapted by a team of volunteer attorneys. The case book includes all mock trial rules, case trial rules and the case itself with all necessary evidence, which can include witness affidavits, pictures, maps, reference information, expert opinions or other information.

Training is provided in the summer for new teacher and attorney coaches. Attendees are provided with additional written and other information that helps them strategize ways to form a successful mock trial program, and the South Carolina Bar Law Related Education (LRE) staff is available after the training to provide additional support as needed.

Effectiveness

Mock trial supports almost all of the core skills and abilities that students need to achieve to succeed in school, college and life. Students must learn the valuable arts of critical analysis, public speaking, teamwork, argument, persuasion and sportsmanship. Mock trial is as much an exercise in character-building as law related education.

From Volume 4, Issue 1 of *Mock Trial Matters*, the official National High School Mock Trial newsletter, note the following thoughts from students:

"I have never worked so hard in my life and had so much fun doing it."

"Mock trial is the most rewarding experience of my entire high school career."

"Mock trial is an unbelievable experience. It made me realize the talents I have inside of me."

Teachers have noted that after participating in mock trial, students do not focus on winning championships. They most appreciate the camaraderie with their team members and the self-confidence, maturity and strength of character that they developed as they prepared for the competition. One South Carolina attorney, who is a former mock trial team member and attorney coach, noted, "Mock trial is the single best opportunity for learning about the law and oneself available to students today."

Program description

The High School Mock Trial Program is a hands-on exercise in learning about due process. It is most often conducted as an extracurricular activity but can also be incorporated into law, forensics or public speaking classes. Private schools, home school groups and community groups are welcome and encouraged to participate.

The goal of mock trial is to educate students about the basis of our American judicial system and the mechanics of litigation. Through participation in the mock trial program, students will increase basic skills such as listening, speaking, writing, reading and problem analysis. Each participating school enters a team sponsored by a teacher volunteer that is composed of

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For more information, contact
Law Related Education Division
South Carolina Bar
P.O. Box 608
Columbia, SC 29202
(803) 252-5139 or lre@scbar.org

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Another South Carolina attorney shares remarks on his experiences as a mock trial coach:

"I participated in mock trial as a student, and I have been involved as a coach since graduating from law school. I am convinced that coaching mock trial has made me a better trial lawyer. Mock trial requires a coach to help the team prepare an entire court room presentation that includes an opening, direct examinations, cross examinations, a closing, and occasionally a preliminary motion. Teaching high school students each aspect of a trial sharpens the attorney coach's knowledge and command of the subject they are teaching. Coaching a team is a tremendous time commitment, but I can say without any hesitation that it is worth it. And, last year some of the first students I helped coach enrolled in law school. I am confident that the mock trial program is helping to develop future attorneys who will bring further honor and respect to our profession. It also develops skills that can be applied to any profession, better preparing all student participants for their careers and ultimately, their lives."

Harold Staley, Elrod Jones Leader & Benson – Rock Hill, SC

Incentives

- Trainings for teacher and attorney coaches are provided in the summer and early fall at no cost. On-site trainings can also be scheduled at no charge.
- The South Carolina Bar will pay for a substitute, if necessary, so that a teacher can attend the mock trial training. Light snacks and lunch are also provided.
- The LRE Division provides each team with two copies of the case materials,

and additional copies are available for purchase. Case materials are also available online at www.scbare.org/lre, and teachers and students can participate in a threaded discussion via the Internet to discuss the current year's case.

- The LRE Division can provide assistance with locating attorney coaches.
- Senior high school mock trial students are eligible to apply for a scholarship toward their college education.
- Teacher coaches implementing Mock Trial are encouraged to apply for the LRE Teacher of the Year Award, which comes with a \$1,000 recognition award.
- School resource officers implementing *High School Mock Trial* can apply for the LRE Citizen of the Year award, which comes with a \$1,000 recognition award.
- Schools that participate in Mock Trial can apply for LRE School of the Year Award, which offers a \$5,000 award to be spent at the school's discretion.
- Schools having financial difficulty implementing the program can apply for a school grant in the spring of each year up to \$10,000.

Contact

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South Carolina Bar
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Columbia, SC 29202-0608
(803) 252-5139 or lre@sccbar.org



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