

**Course Title:**

Mock Trial

**Length:**

Two-Six months

Grades 7 & 8

**Schools:**

Pierrepoint

Union

**Dated:**

August 17, 2015

GIFTED AND TALENTED DEPARTMENT  
MOCK TRIAL MINI-COURSE GRADES 7 & 8

### **1. Introduction/Overview/Philosophy**

The program enables students to become familiar with the fundamentals of Mock Trial and Law. This unit exposes students to the processes and outcomes of the various court systems. Students study the components of proper trial etiquette. They will learn and practice decision-making, persuasive writing and public speaking. This knowledge is integrated into a real world simulation through the planning and implementation of a mock trial. Working in cooperative groups, students will create an unbiased case that can be “performed” as a mock trial. The cases can then be entered into the Law Adventure Competition held by the NJ Bar Association.

### **2. Objectives**

#### **A. Curriculum objectives for Mock Trial**

The purpose of this unit is to understand law, court systems and mock trial etiquette. Students will study the areas of Social Studies (justice system, government) and Language Arts (writing, oral presentation, communication) as well as develop and practice critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, cooperative learning, and leadership skills.

**Students will be able to independently use their learning to...** Understand civil court case; Make a reasoned judgment based on evidence and testimony; Write fact patterns with a completion of the writing process

#### **a. Students will be able to**

- Gather, organize, and apply information concerning a specific court case and in a mock trial.
- Recognize and solve problems by determining which possible solutions will have the greatest impact on the court case.
- Think critically when identifying the similarities and differences among the various court systems and cases (criminal vs. civil).
- Communicate effectively through writing, verbal expression and visual presentations about law related issues.
- Work responsibly as an individual, a group member, and a leader as they prepare each case and demonstrate the proper courtroom procedures.

#### **B. NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards**

##### **Common Core ELA-Literacy**

RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.8.9 9. Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

W.8.1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W.8.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas,

concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.8.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.8.5. With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

W.8.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

W.8.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

SL.8.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.8.3. Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

SL.8.6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

### **Social Studies List of Standards**

6.1 (U.S. History: America in the World) All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past and present interactions of people, cultures, and the environment shape the American heritage. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions that reflect fundamental rights and core democratic values as productive citizens in local, national, and global communities.

6.3 (Active Citizenship in the 21st Century) All students will acquire the skills needed to be active, informed citizens who value diversity and promote cultural understanding by working collaboratively to address the challenges that are inherent in living in an interconnected world.

### **Technology List of Standards**

8.1 (Computer and information literacy) All students will use computer applications to gather and organize information and to solve problems.

### **Life and Career Education in the 21st Century**

9.1 (21st century life skills) All students will demonstrate creative, critical thinking, Collaboration and problem solving skills to function successfully as global citizens and workers in diverse ethnic and organizational cultures.

9.2 (Consumer, family, and life skills) All students will demonstrate critical life skills in order to be functional members of society.

### **3. Proficiency levels**

This mini-course is offered to students in grades 7 & 8 who have qualified for the Gifted and Talented Program.

### **4. Methods of Assessment**

#### **a. Student Assessment**

The teacher will provide a variety of assessments, which may include, but are not limited to the following: teacher observation of individual and group exercises, class discussions, and evaluation of student products.

- Pre-assessment: Informal open-ended questions
- Performance Task: Participation in mock trial
- Post Assessment: Written personal reflection on mock trial

#### **b. Curriculum Assessment/ Teacher Assessment**

The teacher/ Gifted and Talented coordinator will review this course and continue to modify and update its content.

### **5. Grouping**

Students self-select this mini-course in grades 7 & 8.

### **6. Articulation/ Scope & Sequence**

Introduction to case topic (Online as needed/Law Adventure booklet and rules)

Brainstorm ideas

Development of fact pattern

Creation of witness statements

Develop questions to for proof of evidence

Publish final copy (Microsoft Word/Online as needed)

Decide role for lawyers and witnesses

Case samples

Develop opening statements, questions for witnesses, cross examinations, and closing statements

Case samples

The course may offer students the opportunity:

- *To generate interest:* Students will assume the role of attorney and prepare a case for a mock trial.
- *To provoke thought:* Students will anticipate the opposing side's questions and strategies.
- *To encourage caring:* Students will work as a group to prepare their side's case.
- *To facilitate doing:* Students will actively participate in a mock trial.
- *To promote generalization:* Students will recognize the components of the various court systems and the role they play in guaranteeing due process.

Weekly (Working individually, in small groups, and as a whole group, students will over a course of 8 weeks)

#### **a. Skill Building**

- Discuss topics pertaining to the basic court systems.

- Discuss the procedures involved in an actual trial.
- Determine relevant information to be used in a mock trial.
- b. Applying the Skills
- Plan and prepare witness testimonies and evidence to be used in a mock trial.
- Plan and prepare opening and closing remarks.
- Preparing witness questions and statements.
- Written personal reflection.

## **7. Resources**

### **A. Speakers**

Speakers may be recruited depending on the topics selected.

### **B. References**

### **C. Resources**

- Microsoft Word
- Inspiration
- PowerPoint

### **D. Texts**

There is no text for this course. Students create a case with requirements provided by the NJ Bar Association/Law Adventure specifically for that year.

*Other texts can include:*

Law and Justice: An Introduction to the American Legal System by Howard Abadinsky.

The Juvenile Justice System: Delinquency Processing, and the Law by Dean John Champion.

You are the Justice! By Michel Lipman, JD

Jury Trials in the Classroom by Betty M. See

What's the Verdict? By Ted LeValliant & Marcel Theroux

## **8. Methodologies**

Methods include but are not limited to:

- Cooperative learning
- Individual and group research
- Individual and group problem solving
- Inquiry
- Class discussion
- Brainstorming
- Critical Thinking
- Experimenting

## **9. Suggested Activities**

- Team-building activities
- Skill-building activities
- Exploring multiple intelligences
- Researching
- Public Speaking

## **10. Interdisciplinary Connections**

The scope of materials for this Mock Trial unit is broad and interdisciplinary. While rooted in Social Studies and English, cases can be (and normally are) constructed from real-world, social and current events/issues, and different perspectives (such as cultural and social) are examined. The Law Adventure/NJ Bar Association presents requirements and problems to the students that are interdisciplinary in nature. Students are also encouraged in creativity as they prepare their cases. As a team activity, Mock Trial encourages individual responsibility and cooperation among team members.

## **11. Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiating instruction is a flexible process that includes the planning and design of instruction, how that instruction is delivered, and how student progress is measured. Teachers recognize that students can learn in multiple ways as they celebrate students' prior knowledge. By providing appropriately challenging learning, teachers can maximize success for all students.

Examples of Strategies and Practices that Support Students with Disabilities

- Use of visual and multi-sensory formats
- Use of assisted technology
- Use of prompts
- Modification of content and student products
- Testing accommodations
- Authentic assessments

Gifted & Talented Students

- Adjusting the pace of lessons
- Curriculum compacting
- Inquiry-based instruction
- Independent study
- Higher-order thinking skills
- Interest-based content
- Student-driven
- Real-world problems and scenarios

English Language Learners

- Pre-teaching of vocabulary and concepts
- Visual learning, including graphic organizers
- Use of cognates to increase comprehension
- Teacher modeling
- Pairing students with beginning English language skills with students who have more advanced English language skills
- Scaffolding
- word walls
- sentence frames
- think-pair-share
- cooperative learning groups
- teacher think-alouds

## **12. Professional Development**

As per the PDP/100 Hours statement: the teacher will continue to improve expertise through participation in a variety of professional development opportunities. Specialized professional development for teachers in the Gifted and Talented Department is offered through the Bergen County Consortium of Teachers of the Gifted (BCCTG), the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC), and Montclair State University G/T Youth Program