

Have you ever wondered how to make the judicial process come alive for your students?

Have you ever wanted to get your students actively involved in discussions and debates surrounding current court proceedings?

Have you ever wanted to take your students to visit the Colorado Supreme Court or Court of Appeals but lacked the resources?

We encourage you to apply for our Courts in the Community program!

What is Courts in the Community?

Courts in the Community is the educational outreach program started on Law Day in 1986 by the Colorado Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. It gives high school students hands-on experience in how the Colorado judicial system actually works and illustrates how disputes are resolved in a democratic society. The Courts travel to high schools all over Colorado to hear oral arguments in two cases at each location. These are not mock proceedings; they are hearings in actual cases. Each court issues its opinions within a few weeks or months after the arguments.

The justices and judges enjoy traveling to different high schools, meeting a diverse mix of students, and educating the public about their work. Cases, typically one civil and one criminal, are chosen by specifically considering the interests of students.

How can this program benefit your school?

The *Courts in the Community* program provides a learning opportunity for all involved, as we bring the judicial process to you. This is a chance for you and your students to witness arguments involving actual court cases and view the appellate process in progress. It is also a chance for students to meet and interact with attorneys, judges and justices.



Justice Gregory J. Hobbs Jr.(second from right), flanked by (left to right) Justices Allison H. Eid and Nancy E. Rice and former Chief Justice Michael L. Bender, answers a student's question following oral arguments in April 2011 at Ralston Valley High School.

Teachers are provided with background information and teaching materials at a customized workshop, where judges, local lawyers, and court staff help you understand the cases to be argued. Volunteer lawyers from your area may also schedule times to visit your classrooms and answer questions, facilitate discussions, and lead activities with the students in order to help prepare them. There are worlds of possibilities in the activities that revolve around the selected cases.

It is a chance to put your school on the map and provide your students and teachers with a unique learning opportunity as part of the Colorado judicial process.

How do the Courts decide where and when they are going?

The Supreme Court and Court of Appeals try to visit both urban and rural schools each year. Arguments can be held on the school campus or, depending on space, in a nearby college facility or convention center. We look for locations where there is high interest among teachers, students, and administrators. The hosting schools are encouraged to invite other schools in the area to participate in this event as well. Our goal is to expose as many students and communities to our program as possible. We are not opposed to returning to schools we have already visited, especially if significant time has passed.

How can you get involved?

Check with your principal and other teachers (especially government, history, social studies, and law) to make sure there is interest. Then contact Public Information Coordinator Jon Sarché at the Office of the State Court Administrator: (720) 625-5811, (800) 888-0001, or jon.sarche@judicial.state.co.us.

What is required of your school?

You have five main responsibilities when hosting the Supreme Court or Court of Appeals:

- We ask that a representative from your school act as liaison to the court and attend necessary meetings (held at your convenience) to plan the various components of the project. We will take care of setting the cases, contacting the lawyers, and conducting the workshop. We do not expect the school to pick up any major expenses for this visit; we appreciate more that you donate your time, energy, and efforts. The Office of the State Court Administrator will provide a planning guide and work closely with you and your school to ensure a successful visit.

- We expect the teachers whose students will attend the arguments to attend a two-and-a-half-hour workshop held at your school to provide educators with important information from judges, lawyers, and court staff about the cases and the visit.
- You will be responsible for preparing your students both with knowledge of the court and cases and with etiquette, and getting them excited about the visit. We ask teachers to be open to having local volunteer lawyers visit the classrooms to help prepare the students.
- We ask for your help in providing us with a list of appropriate people in your school, district and community whom we can invite to the event.
- You are responsible for setting up the space and providing certain amenities, as outlined in our planning guide.

What happens during a court visit?

Oral arguments are held in the morning. The formal event begins with opening remarks welcoming the audience and explaining the format of the proceedings. Each court hears two oral arguments during a visit. A question-and-answer session between the students and participating lawyers follows each argument. The judges or justices join the open dialogue with the students at the conclusion of the second session. A luncheon traditionally sponsored by the courts and the state and local bar associations wraps up the activities. During this lunch, students selected by their teachers have the opportunity to talk informally with the justices or judges. Participating lawyers and members of the community may also be invited, depending upon resources. The entire visit generally lasts four to five hours.

What will your students learn from this experience?

- The importance of the rule of law
- The manner in which a democratic society resolves disputes
- The history of the courts
- How the Colorado Judicial Branch functions
- How the appellate process works
- What it takes to become a judge
- The role and responsibilities of judges
- Who are Colorado's high court judges
- Courtroom etiquette
- The steps a court case follows through the appellate process
- Speech and debate tactics
- How to argue a case
- How to objectively examine a case
- Implications and impact of court decisions
- How to bridge the gap between the classroom and the "real world"



Courts in the Community

provided by the

Colorado Supreme Court
&
Colorado Court of Appeals

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If you have any questions or comments, or if you would like more information about our *Courts in the Community* program, please contact:

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