

# ***Mock Trial is a practical experience of our legal system that teaches critical thinking, teamwork and confidence -- open to all Wyoming youth in grades 9-12***

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## **What is Mock Trial?**

The Wyoming High School Mock Trial Program introduces students to the American legal system and provides a challenging opportunity for academic and personal growth and achievement.

As they prepare a case for WHSMT competition, students get an inside perspective of the legal system and understand the process we use to decide our disputes. Mock trial is for students of all abilities in grades 9-12 who want to learn about the legal system, sharpen their critical thinking and strategy skills, enjoy teamwork and develop poise and confidence as they portray attorneys and witnesses.

The work of preparing and presenting a case applies to standards in language arts, performing arts and social studies. It helps prepare students for any endeavour that requires thorough preparation, quick thinking and effective presentation.

Use the resources on this WHSMT Website to learn about the benefits of mock trial, the basics of competition and guidance for students, teachers and attorney coaches. Every county library in Wyoming has a copy of "May It Please the Court," mock trial materials developed by the Georgia State Bar.

WHSMT is supported by an annual grant from the Wyoming State Bar.

For more information, contact the WHSMT state coordinator, Marguerite Herman, at [wominghsmocktrial@gmail.com](mailto:wominghsmocktrial@gmail.com), or call 307-638-1468

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## **How schools and students can get involved.**

WHSMT releases a "case" on Sept. 1, and student teams have about 10 weeks to prepare it for state competition, which is held on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The 2013 location is tentatively set for Cheyenne.

Public or private schools of any size can field one or more teams. If you need help finding local attorneys to help coach, contact WHSMT by calling 307-638-1468 or email [wominghsmocktrial@gmail.com](mailto:wominghsmocktrial@gmail.com). Check out all the resources on our Web site, and check out "May It Please the Court" from your county library.

Teacher and attorney coaches complete registration forms and send to WHSMT with the registration fee of \$100.

We welcome schools to use current and previous cases as classroom projects, too.

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## **Attorneys needed for mock trial!**

Attorney coaches who help students prepare for competition are the heart of high school mock

## **Mock Trial Objectives**

### **For Students**

trial, and attorneys who judge the competition are essential to the students' experience of the legal system. CLE hours are available for attorneys who score or preside during competition rounds.

Contact your local high school and talk to a teacher who will organize 6-8 students and arrange for a time and place to meet. If you would like help locating a school program, contact WHSMT at 307-638-1468 or [wyminghsmt@gmail.com](mailto:wyminghsmt@gmail.com).

WHSMT also can use help composing civil or criminal cases for the Wyoming competition. This requires complete familiarity with mock trial rules of competition and evidence. Let us know if you would like to help with writing a case or adapting one from another state mock trial program.

- To gain a basic understanding of the legal mechanism our society and government uses to resolve disputes and apply our laws
- To develop critical thinking skills, oral advocacy skills and understanding of a substantive area of law
- To increase understanding of the roles of persons in the judicial system
- To study fundamental law-related concepts of justice, due process and the importance of legal advocacy
- To increase proficiency in skills of listening, public speaking, reading, constructive argument and critical thinking
- To learn skills of strategic planning and implementation

#### **For Schools**

- To promote cooperation among students of various abilities and interest
- To demonstrate to the community the achievements of high school students
- To provide a competitive event set in an academic environment, as students gain understanding and skills that will help them in any pursuit as adults
- To bring together several disciplines, developing skills that will help students succeed in the classroom

#### **For the Community**

- To enhance civic education by providing accurate and practical information about law and the legal system.
- To provide opportunities for positive interactions among young people, attorneys and others in the community
- To demonstrate a model for public/private partnerships in education

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## **Read what people have to say about mock trial:**

**\*Click on the name to see the full testimonial**

**District Judge Keith Kautz - *Nothing helps a lawyer (or judge) improve as much as teaching what he does, and watching students practice what was taught...***

**Teacher Kristi McGuire – *So much for students to gain...***

**Attorney and high school mock trial student Erin Kendall – *Learned far more about problem-solving and critical thinking than I was able to in classes alone...***

**Mock trial coordinator and teacher Don Morris – *Students consider it one of the most important learning experiences of high school...***

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### **Eighth District Judge Keith Kautz:**

**I strongly encourage lawyers, judges and schools to support the program. Among the benefits I have seen from the mock trial experience are:**

**Participation builds understanding of our adversarial legal system and of the importance of lawyers. Students learn what lawyers do and how the legal system works, and their parents and teachers learn as well. I believe mock trial is a terrific community outreach and public relations tool for lawyers. Everyone I know of came away from their mock trial experience (or their son's or daughter's experience) feeling more confident in our legal system and in lawyers.**

- Participation improved my abilities as a judge and the abilities of the lawyers who helped coach. We had to think carefully about what the system does and requires, in order to explain it to students. Nothing helps a lawyer (or judge) improve as much as teaching what he does, and watching students practice what was taught.**
- High School Mock Trial provided opportunities for many students, not just a select few with the best speaking ability or grades. Because students participate in roles as witnesses and lawyers, they necessarily work together and develop understanding of how the pieces of a case fit together.**
- Mock Trial preparation is hard work that stretches students (and coaches), much like trial preparation does. I saw many students develop abilities to handle themselves, speak in public, explain and analyze in ways they never thought possible.**

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### **Kristi McGuire, teacher coach, Torrington High School:**

**I was first introduced to mock trial while using it as a Business Law class activity at Laramie High School. The students worked hard and learned a lot about the legal system. Several students would have been considered at-risk but because of their involvement did well in classes and earned their diplomas.**

**Later, at Lingle-fort Laramie High School, students in Future Business Leaders of America participated. One is now an attorney and another a legal secretary. The students learned teamwork, how to communicate well, how to solve problems and how to present themselves professionally.**

**As a teacher coach I enjoy working with students and watching them develop into confident young adults. There is so much for students to gain.**

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### **Erin Kendall, Cheyenne attorney and former mock trial student:**

**High school mock trial was a great chance to participate in a competition that stretched me intellectually as a student and allowed me to learn far more about problem-solving and critical thinking than I was able to in my classes alone.**

**I worked with creative and intelligent students to prepare our trial strategy and learned from them as we practiced and competed. We learned first-hand the challenging work needed to prepare for a trial, the frustration of defeat and the exhilaration of seeing our hard work succeed. I saw the legal profession and our courts far differently. I appreciated the hard work and dedication of attorneys to diligently represent their clients. I developed a great respect for our legal system and ultimately pursued the legal profession myself.**

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**Don Morris, retired teacher and former state mock trial coordinator:**

**My former students, several of whom are now attorneys and paralegals, consider it one of the most important learning experiences of high school. The skills and knowledge these students gained by working with Wyoming attorneys and judges proved to be invaluable in high school, later in college and in choosing a profession.**

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