

## GW Law Students Empower D.C. Middle School Students with Mock Trial Coaching Program



In a remarkable display of legal education and community engagement, GW Law students have actively coached middle school students from Stuart Hobson Middle School in Washington, D.C. for a mock trial program. The program, which spanned six months, recently culminated in a thrilling trial where a jury found the fictional student, Kevin Smith, attending Duke Ellington High School, not guilty of theft.

Under the guidance of seven GW Law students, twenty Stuart Hobson Middle School students received intensive legal coaching, preparing them for the mock trial. The trial, presided over by D.C. District Court Judge Jia Cobb, revolved around the hypothetical case of Smith, a Duke Ellington High School junior accused of stealing a fellow student's \$700 Nikon camera. Kate Weisburd, an associate professor of law, and Ty Alper, a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley skillfully crafted the case.

To provide the middle school students with a comprehensive understanding of trial proceedings, Weisburd and her team of GW Law students made weekly visits to Stuart Hobson Middle School in northeast D.C. Every Friday afternoon, the students learned how to construct persuasive opening and closing arguments and how to effectively examine witnesses. Weisburd emphasized that the program aimed to instill analytical, writing, public speaking, and teamwork skills in the young participants.

Expressing her satisfaction with the students' progress, Weisburd stated, "This trial marks the culmination of months of hard work by the students." While Weisburd had previously taught mock trial programs to fifth graders in other schools, she modified the program for middle school students by introducing additional witnesses and creating a more complex fictional case. She expressed her intention to make the program an annual fixture at Stuart Hobson Middle School and may even raise the level of challenge to match the evolving skill set of the students.

**Trust BCG Attorney Search to connect you with top legal employers in your area. Search now!**

The impact of the coaching program extended beyond the trial itself. After participating in similar activities during high school and college, Kaitlyn Iwanowski, a third-year law student, joined the program to share her passion for mock trials. She expressed her joy in witnessing others develop a fondness for the legal process, saying, "It felt really good to see other people fall in love with it like I did."

Another third-year law student, Grace Hong, found the growth and increased confidence of the middle school students particularly rewarding. She observed that at the program's start, many students were hesitant and stumbled over their words, but their skills and self-assurance flourished over time. Hong commented, "But today, I feel like they just grew a lot."

The collaboration between GW Law students and Stuart Hobson Middle School has demonstrated the power of mentorship and education in shaping young minds and fostering valuable skills. By introducing middle school students to the intricacies of the legal profession, the program not only sparked interest and enthusiasm but also provided them with a solid foundation for future academic and professional pursuits.

As the mock trial program concludes, the dedication and efforts of the GW Law students, under the guidance of Kate Weisburd, have undoubtedly left a lasting impact on the participating middle school students. Through their commitment to teaching, inspiring, and empowering, the GW Law students have paved the way for a brighter future for these aspiring legal minds.