

# Mock trial

## Leveraging community educators in learning

Discover the ways schools are leveraging community educators to deepen learning for students. Community educators include youth-serving professionals and volunteers who leverage their knowledge and skills to support learners and complement professional educators. Below, students investigated the fair treatment of animals in the trial: Sea World vs. the State.



One-time visit



One community educator



Science | English



Whole-group conversation



Teachers saw how engagement ramps up when students have input on the content. While we were deeply covering various ELA and science topics, students knew that they had a significant part in where the learning was headed.

– Kyrene de las Manitas Innovation Academy teacher

### Preparing students and community educators

#### Unit launch:

- For the launch of an endangered species unit, students looked at fair treatment of animals in the trial: Sea World vs. the State. An "I notice, I wonder" activity sparked strong opinions and high-level discussion, encouraging teachers to modify their unit plan and allow student interest to drive learning.
- A lawyer explicitly joined the teachers for unit planning, expanding the team's distributed expertise. The lawyer advised them on the components of a mock trial and assisted in brainstorming ways for students to prepare for writing a persuasive essay.

### Social-capital and networking

#### Community educator visit:

- The lawyer visited the classroom to share how a trial runs, how to prepare for a case and what makes an effective argument.
- Students then had the opportunity to ask questions to help them better understand their role in the upcoming trial.

### Exploration and culminating experience

#### After the community educator visit:

- Driving question: How can we, as conservationists, bring awareness to the public about endangered species and create solutions for the problem?
- To prepare for the trial, students created persuasive arguments, found evidence to cite and planned their speeches for their day in court.
- Finding evidence to support their views and roles had students read and write, critique their work and try to poke holes in their own arguments to create stronger ones.

### Lasting connections

#### Continued learning:

- By investigating and finding evidence to support and oppose arguments, this unit pushed young learners to dive into work that is often dismissed as too challenging for the elementary level.
- Students gained exposure to people who are in the field, as well as general knowledge of law, trials and persuasion to apply to other topics.

Impact on learning for students	Invite with clarity	Considerations for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students shared input into direction of learning and educators aligned it with student passion</li><li>• Highlighted huge value of bringing the community into the learning; teachers can know the things they know well, and defer to others for things that are outside their expertise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clearly outline the potential ask and time commitment</li><li>• Select expert(s) with the knowledge and flexibility to suit student needs</li><li>• Invite community educators to use nanocourses on displaying professionalism prior to the visit</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Synthesize students' questions into topics for the community educator to respond to</li><li>• Consider how to prepare community educators. More resources at: <a href="https://workforce.education.asu.edu/collection/community-educators">workforce.education.asu.edu/collection/community-educators</a></li></ul>