



# Expanding Civic Education Workgroup

## Report and Recommendations

**October 2024**

## **Notice of Disclaimer:**

**The Michigan Supreme Court established the Michigan Judicial Council by MCR 8.128 to make recommendations on matters pertinent to the administration of justice and the strategic plan of the Michigan judicial branch. The opinions and recommendations contained in this document are those of the Michigan Judicial Council, do not constitute legal advice and do not represent the official position or policies of the Michigan Supreme Court or State Court Administrative Office or any affiliated organization of a workgroup member.**

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## Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

Civic education and public service has been a long-time passion of mine. As a result, I am honored and elated to be the Chair of the Expanding Civic Education Workgroup. As a former Consultant for Neighborhood Legal Services of Michigan, providing Street Law Instruction for 15 years in various classrooms within the state of Michigan, and as a member of the Executive Board for the Michigan Center for Civic Education (MCCE), I have been actively involved in promoting civic education and have personally observed how it prepares students to be better informed and actively engaged.

I have seen firsthand through my volunteer work with Mock Trial and Moot Court programs through various schools and organizations in Oakland County that civic education is an invaluable experience for students giving them a sense of belonging, building their confidence, and helping them to understand how the judicial system works. In addition, it prepares them to be active and engaged citizens who can contribute to their communities.

As Chair of this workgroup, I had the opportunity to collaborate with old friends and I made some new ones. We were united in our shared vision of expanding civic education and in our opinion that Judges are a valuable and key component in leading efforts to expand it. The most meaningful change occurs at the local level; therefore, we need to encourage collaboration between judges, local courts and community partners to reach many young people at the local level. Michigan's commitment to and leadership in civic and law-related education will serve to spotlight best practices not only for Michigan but also for the country. Growing the recommended statewide civic education infrastructure will propel Michigan to the front of this field, with the hopes of hosting a future national mock trial championship and related professional learning to enhance civic knowledge, skills, and trust in government.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with the members of this workgroup. I want to thank all the members for their innovative ideas and hard work. Many of the members of this talented group have also been actively involved with providing civic education, and they have provided the other members of the workgroup with great information about programs they have been involved with. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this workgroup.

“Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.”  
Nelson Mandela

Hon. Kameshia D. Gant  
Chair of the Expanding Civic Education Workgroup

## Letter from the Project Director

Declining public trust in and knowledge about the courts and other institutions has continued. The Center for Civic Education published statistics that 44% of Americans cannot name the three branches of government, and 1 in 3 Americans say they might consider abolishing or limiting the United States Supreme Court, and only 30% of Americans born since 1980 rate the courts as essential to live in a democracy. <sup>1</sup>

Courts depend on public trust and confidence to have the ability to fulfill their mission and perform their functions. Implicit in that statement is adherence to the rule of law. Unfortunately, public trust in the courts continues to decline. A study by the National Center of State Courts (NCSC) found that 61% of the population have either a great deal of confidence or some confidence in the courts. This is a significant decline from 2012 when it was 67%. Although the courts are the most trusted branch of government, it is too close for comfort. <sup>2</sup>

Running parallel to this decline has been the gradual loss of civic education and U.S. history in the schools. As a result, many state courts and the NCSC believe there is one way to increase public trust: education!

Civic education is a tool that can inspire future court leaders and staff, lawyers, jurors, workers, court litigants, court journalists, and the like. This human connection can be impactful and powerful in developing the court's relationship with the public. A meaningful educational experience with our justice system before leaving high school should be the norm and not the exception. The personal connection and education about the court system can be used to combat apathy, ignorance, and misinformation.

Leadership in civic education is essential to getting our messages out. Judges, stakeholders and court staff may be more likely to participate if they knew where to reach out and the level of impact they can make. Judicial leadership will continue to play a crucial role expanding civic education by building bridges and opening doors to opportunities for collaboration and helping to reach those we historically have not.

Hon. Susan Dobrich (ret.)  
Michigan Judicial Council, Project Director

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Civic Education, <https://www.civiced.org> (accessed October 28, 2024)

<sup>2</sup> National Center for State Courts, *State of the State Courts 2023 Poll*, [https://www.ncsc.org/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0038/96878/SSC\\_2023\\_Presentation.pdf](https://www.ncsc.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0038/96878/SSC_2023_Presentation.pdf) (Accessed October 28, 2024)

## Executive Summary

In its [2022-2025 Strategic Agenda](#), the Michigan Judicial Council (MJC) defines its mission as “Michigan’s One Court of Justice delivers justice for all by providing access, protecting rights, resolving disputes, and applying the law under the Constitution.” The strategic agenda outlines five goal areas for improving the judiciary statewide, one of them being public trust and understanding. In 2023 the council established a workgroup under the public trust and understanding goal to examine procedural fairness practices. The workgroup presented its [report and recommendations](#) to the council at their strategic planning meeting in November of 2023 where the recommendations were adopted and the MJC determined a continuing need for work to be done and established the Expanding Civic Education workgroup. In the [2024 Operational Plan](#), the MJC addressed the decline of public trust in government institutions, including the courts, by charging the workgroup with the following:

1. Evaluate training and public education resources currently used and identify opportunities for expansion and improvement.
2. Recommend future opportunities, partnerships, and best practices to reach marginalized and underserved communities.

The workgroup met throughout 2024 to identify existing programs and civic education efforts, as well as develop strategies for expanding those programs to increase understanding and knowledge of the judiciary’s roles and responsibilities. The workgroup identified underserved populations and developed strategies for communication and expanding resources. Ultimately the workgroup arrived at the following recommendations:

1. Increase Collaboration and Judicial Leadership in Civic Education Efforts.
2. Expand Existing Programs to Reach Underserved Populations.
3. Expand Current Curricular and Co-Curricular Civic Education Programs and Develop Plans for their Sustainability.

In addition to the three recommendations, the workgroup identified additional areas for consideration based on a four-step program outlined in the [Beyond Civics Report](#) that was released by the Conference of Chief Justices, Council of State Court Administrators and the National Center for State Courts.

## Introduction

In 2021, the Michigan Supreme Court established the Michigan Judicial Council (MJC) with a mandate to examine the Michigan judicial system and create a strategic plan for making improvements to the judiciary, statewide. In August of 2022, the MJC released the [2022-2025 Strategic Agenda](#) which identified public trust and understanding as one of five strategic goal areas. The 2024 operational plan took that step further in a multifaceted and comprehensive approach that included expanding public outreach and education to promote confidence in the judicial branch; enhancing education about civics, democracy, and the rule of law; and improving understanding of court procedures and practices among the public. This approach recognizes that public trust in the judiciary is intrinsically linked to citizens' overall civic literacy and their understanding of the role courts play in a democratic society.

In an era where public trust in institutions is increasingly challenged, the role of civic education has never been more crucial. Civic education serves as the cornerstone of a thriving democracy, equipping citizens with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for active and informed participation in civic life. It encompasses a broad spectrum of learning experiences, from formal classroom instruction to hands-on community engagement, all aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of democratic processes, rights, and responsibilities. Recognizing this, the MJC established the Expanding Civic Education workgroup to carry out this important work and partnered with the Michigan Center for Civic Education ([MCCE](#)) to both understand the possibilities and limitations in the current landscape and suggest pathways forward.

## Why Civic Education?

Public trust and confidence in government institutions have been on a steady decline for many years. While over the past few years that decline has seemed to stabilize, according to the National Center for State Courts' 2023 State of the State Courts survey, the state courts still only have a 61% confidence rate.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, when surveying on the topic of the overall judicial system, the numbers are worse. The percentage of Americans who express either "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of trust and confidence in the judicial branch has fallen from 75% in 2000 to under 50% in 2022.<sup>4</sup> Civic education plays an important role in fostering the understanding of rights, responsibilities and the functions of the three branches of government. [Made By Us](#), which engages younger generations in history and civics, has created an index

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<sup>3</sup> National Center for State Courts, *State of the State Courts 2023 Poll*, [https://www.ncsc.org/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0039/96879/2023-SoSC-Analysis-2023.pdf](https://www.ncsc.org/data/assets/pdf_file/0039/96879/2023-SoSC-Analysis-2023.pdf) (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> University of Pennsylvania Annenberg Public Policy Center, *Report Finds 'Withering of Public Confidence in the Courts'*, <https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/report-finds-withering-of-public-confidence-in-the-courts/> (accessed October 28, 2024).

containing a collection of vetted statistics and key data points on Gen Z's demographics, behaviors, needs and views of civics, politics and history. The index reports that "87% of all Americans want to learn more about civics and want to take a course in that area..." Additionally, they report on a national level only 67% of 18–29-year-olds report having taken a civics class in high school.<sup>5</sup> The lack of knowledge on the basic function of the judicial branch can lead to misconceptions and a lack of trust and confidence in the judiciary.

The [Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards](#) first mention the state's judicial branch and its responsibility to resolve conflict in standards for grade 3.<sup>6</sup> Although high school graduation requirements include one semester of civics instruction under [MCL 380.1166\(2\)](#)<sup>7</sup>, state courts are encompassed in a single, broad standard that requires students to be able to "[d]escribe how state, local, and tribal governments are organized, their major responsibilities, and how they affect the lives of people residing in their jurisdiction(s)." (C – 3.2.3). All other standards and examples about courts focus on the role of federal courts, primarily on landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases. In the classroom, time is short, and lessons and materials to teach federal cases are more plentiful, so that is where emphasis naturally falls. Michigan is a "local control" state, so each district can use the [Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards](#) as it sees fit.

In addition to curriculum limitations, misconceptions and information also contribute to gaps in knowledge and understanding of the judiciary. One common misconception is the overlap or partnership of courts and police as if they are one in the same. These entities serve distinct roles within the justice system but operate within two separate but equal branches of government. This misunderstanding can lead to unrealistic expectations and confusion about the roles each plays in the legal system. Effective civic education can help to clarify these distinctions, helping individuals to better navigate and interact with the judicial system while also promoting a deeper understanding, which could in turn result in higher instances of trust and confidence in Michigan's Judiciary.

The recent publication, *Judicature*, also notes a sense of rising polarization is at hand, which is intricately linked to levels of civic education and media literacy. Recent U.S. Supreme Court cases are increasingly seen as partisan.

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<sup>5</sup> Made by Us, *Gen Z Research Index*, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KwCFb5Jt9ks-\\_bdoStVQGj7mW2DTAsJn5aqUPWAMh48/pub#h.fp43zy87w75g](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KwCFb5Jt9ks-_bdoStVQGj7mW2DTAsJn5aqUPWAMh48/pub#h.fp43zy87w75g), (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Michigan Department of Education, *Michigan K-12 Standards for Social Studies*, p. 33 available at [https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Academic-Standards/Social\\_Studies\\_Standards.pdf?rev=7ec086ebb7814277baf6702705fb8007](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Academic-Standards/Social_Studies_Standards.pdf?rev=7ec086ebb7814277baf6702705fb8007) (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> MCL 380.1166(2), <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Laws/MCL?objectName=MCL-380-1166>.

“[T]rust in all public institutions...is in decline. Political discourse challenging an institution’s legitimacy can undermine confidence in the processes and procedures of democracy. And the same polarization that has eroded support for the judiciary has also reduced belief in democratic norms.”<sup>8</sup>

Finally, there is a lack of time, funding, commitment and experience-based education. MCCE along with the MiCivics Coalition conducted a series of listening tours throughout Michigan. The results are consistent with the data above.<sup>9</sup> A systemic lack of investment in civic education, and few and far between place-based and experiential learning opportunities have yielded the results we see today. We know Michiganders need a more predictable and sustained investment to make civics and the law come to life.

Expanding civic education is essential to helping the public understand the breadth of issues the judicial system handles extends beyond the realm of criminal cases. Many people associate the judiciary primarily with criminal law, yet it encompasses a wide array of legal matters including civil disputes, family law, administrative issues, and constitutional questions, including civil rights. By broadening civic education, individuals can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how courts handle diverse cases. This deeper awareness and understanding can lead to better public engagement with the legal system, more informed participation, and increased levels of confidence in the judiciary’s ability to uphold justice across various aspects of society.

Another challenge facing the judiciary is people’s perception of the judiciary based on media and Hollywood portrayals of the judicial system. The media has significant influence over public perceptions of the judiciary, often shaping how people view the legal system through its portrayal of court cases, judicial decisions, and legal professionals. Sensationalized or selective reporting can skew an individual’s understanding of legal proceedings leading to misconceptions about the fairness of judicial decisions, and the complexity and effectiveness of the judicial system. By expanding civic education

*“Those who are less knowledgeable about the judiciary are more likely to believe that judges are biased and less likely to believe that the courts act in the public interest.”*

Hon. Sandra Day O’Connor  
Supreme Court of the United States

<sup>8</sup> Patterson Jr, Levendusky, Winneg, and Jamieson, *The Withering of Public Confidence in the Courts*, 108 *Judicature* 1 (2024) available at <https://judicature.duke.edu/articles/the-withering-of-public-confidence-in-the-courts/> (accessed October 30, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> The MiCivics Coalition, *Listening Tour Findings – Michiganders’ Wants*, <https://micivics.org/#listening-tour-findings> (accessed October 30, 2024).

efforts, there is potential to combat media misconceptions and misinformation by equipping individuals with the skills necessary to navigate today's complicated information landscape.

## **The Work of the Expanding Civic Education Workgroup**

The MCCE defines civic education as a lifelong process inclusive of formal and information learning for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for participatory governance in a representative democracy. Recognizing the vital importance of civic education, the MJC has taken significant steps to enhance civic literacy and engagement. The MJC believes a deep understanding of the judiciary and judicial process is crucial to successful civic education. To support healthy civic learning, the MJC is committed to ensuring that all education (K-12 and beyond) supports the public's trust and understanding of the judicial branch and how it impacts civil society.

### **Membership**

The Expanding Civic Education workgroup, led by Judge Kameshia Gant and Project Manager and retired Judge Susan Dobrich, embarked on an intensive and collaborative journey spanning ten months. The workgroup was charged with evaluating training and public education resources currently available and identifying opportunities for expansion and further partnerships. In addition to the MCCE, the workgroup consisted of representatives from various stakeholder groups including the State Bar of Michigan, Michigan Department of Education, and the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center, among others. The workgroup demonstrated a strong commitment to its mission by convening twice monthly for one-hour sessions conducted via Zoom. This consistent meeting schedule ensured regular progress and allowed for continuous refinement of ideas and strategies.

### **A Working Definition of Civic Education**

The workgroup's initial task was to establish a working definition of civic education, a challenge that proved more complex than initially anticipated due to the multifaceted nature of the concept. Recognizing the potential for the discussion to digress into numerous directions, the group strategically tailored its focus to align within the MJC's purview, emphasizing the role of the judicial branch in civic education. This process involved examining various existing definitions of civic education from academic and practical sources, discussing the unique aspects of civic education as it pertains to the judicial system, considering how to balance broad civic knowledge with specific understanding of the courts' role in democracy, and crafting a definition that encompasses knowledge relevant to judicial civic education. The workgroup settled on

adopting the definition from the MCCE with the focus being on fostering a deep understanding of the judiciary and judicial process being crucial to successful civic education. The resulting definition served as a guiding principle for the group's subsequent activities, ensuring a consistent and focused approach to our work.

## Researching Existing Civic Education Programs

A significant portion of the workgroup's efforts was dedicated to researching and cataloging existing civic education programs, with a particular emphasis on those related to the judicial system. For each program, the group

documented target audience, core educational components and methodologies, existing partnerships and collaborations, and potential areas for expansion. As for the latter, the workgroup explored various strategies to expand reach and impact of each program including enhancing accessibility for underserved communities, leveraging technology for broader outreach, developing partnerships with schools, creating resources for educators to integrate judicial civic education into existing curricula, and exploring funding opportunities to support program expansion.

*“Civic education is a lifelong process inclusive of formal and informal learning for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for participatory governance in a representative democracy.”*

The Michigan Center For Civic Education

## Existing Civic Education Programs

In pursuing these objectives, the workgroup was able to explore a wealth of valuable programs and tools already in place across various organizations. These include initiatives such as mock trial competitions, moot court programs, the "We the People" curriculum, and various community outreach efforts led by courts and civic organizations. The following is a list existing programs reviewed by the workgroup:

### **Mock Trial, Michigan Center for Civic Education**

[The Mock Trial program](#) is an extra-curricular, co-curricular, and curricular program that aims to advance knowledge and skills of high school students by incorporating trial procedure, justice, rule of law, and more while encouraging teamwork, collaboration, and public speaking skills. Currently, MCCE aims to host clinics to bring mock trial education to students and schools statewide. MCCE also aims to develop online platforms to make resources and tutorials available to all across the state. Students participate in simulated trials by filling the roles of witnesses and attorneys and enact case facts in front of attorneys

and judges in actual courtrooms. The cases switch between civil and criminal every year exposing students to both types of the law.

The MCCE's mock trial program also has expanded to include Courtroom Artistry and Courtroom Journalism companion programs. Judges and attorneys serve as volunteers to preside over the trial and score the students' performances. Within the program there are opportunities to showcase learned skills and knowledge and/or compete against other schools. The competition options include events at the regional, state, and national levels. MCCE is part of the National High School Mock Trial Championship organization and serves on their Board of Directors. MCCE provides a [Mock Trial in a Box Tool Kit](#) to encourage court administrators, judges, and community members to start their own regional events.

### **Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center**

The MSC Learning Center is located at the Hall of Justice in Lansing. The [Learning Center](#) offers tours, online resources, and programs for the public to learn about the judicial branch of government. Tours of the hands-on exhibit gallery are designed for visitors from grade 3-adult and offered weekdays 9 a.m.-4 p.m., except court holidays. Many online resources about courts, including general information, lesson plans, and an e-newsletter are available through the website.

### **Exploring Careers in the Law, Michigan Supreme Court**

Facilitated through the MSC Learning Center, high school students (rising 10th graders through new graduates) have the opportunity to learn about the legal profession by presenting a moot court case before a panel of judges. Applicants are selected on a first-come, first-served basis for this summer program. A week-long session at the Hall of Justice in Lansing and a one-day session in another location are typically offered.

### **Street Law**

Street Law Inc., a nonprofit organization, offers free online resources, a legal pipeline program, and textbooks for civics/government and practical law courses at the high school and community college levels. The practical law course – often known as [Streetlaw](#) – “provides young people with practical legal knowledge that is relevant to their everyday lives.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Street Law Inc. *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law*, <https://store.streetlaw.org/resource/street-law-textbook-10th-edition/> (accessed October 30, 2024).

### **We the People, Michigan Center for Civics Education**

Since the Bicentennial Commission on the U.S. Constitution, [We the People](#) aims to expand knowledge and understanding of American Democracy. It focuses on the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The curriculum is designed for 3rd-12th grade students with opportunities to engage in community showcases and competitions. Students participate in simulated congressional hearings and “testify” before volunteer attorneys, educators, and civic leaders in the hearing process. The showcases are held in classrooms at the local level, state level, and national level. Research by Georgetown University reveals the tremendous impact this program has on civic knowledge, engagement, and dispositions. The U.S. Department of Education also notes its “contributions to excellence in education”.<sup>11</sup>

### **Teen Court**

Teen court typically is a juvenile diversion program in which teens serve as jurors and/or prosecutors, using positive peer pressure to influence behavior. Programs often involve collaborations among courts, prosecutors, police, schools, and other organizations and allow teens to serve in various roles in the judicial system. (Examples: [City of Holland](#), [Ingham County](#), [Oakland County - District Court 52-1](#), [Wayne County](#))

### **Court Community Connections Program, Michigan Supreme Court**

The Court Community Connections Program was established in 2007 as a public education program for high school students with the goal of helping students to understand the appellate courts and Michigan’s judicial system. The [Court Community Connections program](#) takes the MSC Justices on the road to hear oral arguments and gives students the opportunity to meet with local attorneys who discuss the case that will be argued and participate in debriefing sessions.

### **Levin Center’s Learning by Hearings**

Presented by the Wayne State School of Law’s [Levin Center](#), this program offers high school content modules and an after-school program that provides opportunities for students to experience hearings for themselves. “Our in-class modules include plans and materials for inquiry lessons and in-class simulations, using noteworthy congressional investigations to bring to life principles of accountable governance and historic figures central to the development of our democracy. These classroom modules are anticipated to be suitable for use in U.S. Civics and U.S. History classrooms and are aligned to the MI High School

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<sup>11</sup> Center for Civic Education, *Research and Evaluation – We the People*, <https://www.civiced.org/research/wtp-research> (accessed October 30, 2024).

Content Expectations and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Youth in Government, YMCA**

The Youth in Government program provides a simulation of state government for middle school and high school students with preparation in local schools and statewide events, including conferences at the State Capitol. The Model Judiciary Program (high school) features a mock trial competition.

### **Courts in Schools**

The Court in Schools program is facilitated by local Michigan district court judges as an opportunity to conduct sentencing proceedings at middle schools and high schools. School-age audience members see first-hand the legal, social, and financial consequences of engaging in activities such as reckless driving, drinking and driving, and using/possessing controlled substances. The intent of conducting court proceedings in the school is to illustrate the consequences of many risky behaviors that they or their friends may engage in, but also provides exposure to judicial proceedings.

### **Law Day**

[Law Day](#) is an annual commemoration held on or around May 1 to celebrate the rule of law and cultivate a deeper understanding of the legal system. The American Bar Association (ABA) announces a national theme, typically in September. Planning guides, logos, and themed resources are posted to the ABA website several months in advance to assist organizations that host events.

### **Constitution Day**

Constitution Day commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787, by delegates in Philadelphia. Federal law requires schools that receive federal funding and all federal agencies to hold programs about the Constitution on or near that date each year.

The workgroup acknowledges that while this list contains several effective programs statewide it is not a complete list of what is available and the efforts to expand civic education being made throughout the state. Numerous smaller organizations including local bar associations, universities, and local courts have successfully implemented their own civic education efforts as well.

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<sup>12</sup> The Levin Center, *For Highschool Educators: Inside the Classroom*, <https://levin-center.org/students-educators/for-high-school-educators-2/>, (accessed October 30, 2024).

# Strategies and Recommendations for Expanding Civic Education

## 1. Increased Collaboration Among Stakeholder Groups and Judicial Leadership

In the landscape of civic education, judges occupy a unique and pivotal position. As visible embodiments of the judicial branch and recognizable pillars of government, judges have the potential to make a profound impact on public understanding of the legal system and democratic processes. Recognizing this potential, the Expanding Civic Education workgroup has identified judicial leadership as a cornerstone of its strategy to enhance civic education across the state.

Judges are more than just arbiters of the law; they are educators, community leaders, and ambassadors for the judicial system. Their involvement in civic education initiatives can bring authenticity, authority, and real-world insight to the learning experience. By stepping out from behind the bench and into classrooms, community centers, and public forums, judges can demystify the court system and make the concepts of law and justice more accessible to the public. Moreover, inviting students into the courtroom helps normalize court proceedings and increase students' comfort with legal professions.

The workgroup envisions an expanded role for judges that includes regular appearances in K-12 classrooms to discuss the role of courts, explain legal processes, and answer students' questions about the judiciary. The expertise of both judges and attorneys can be leveraged by working with local and state bar associations to develop and implement programs that enhance collaboration and encourage colleagues to participate in community events.

The workgroup recommends that the Judicial Section of the State Bar of Michigan pave the way in encouraging judges and legal professionals to participate in expanding civic education efforts. The judiciary must collaborate with other branches of government to continue to provide education on the separation of powers and the checks and balances systems. The section could look at the feasibility of devoting docket space for mock trials, the possibility of mandating participation or having a volunteer requirement, and the potential for judges to receive continuing education credits for participating in civic education facilitation trainings. Judges and various positions in the legal field must take an active role in organizing, judging, and providing feedback in law-related and constitutionally driven programs including mock trial and We the People.

To effectuate these goals, the workgroup emphasizes the need for judges to view civic education and community outreach as integral components of their judicial role. This perspective shift requires a concerted effort in judicial training and professional development. These recommendations include peer-to-peer training and mentoring, incorporating civic education workshops and seminars into judicial conferences, creating toolkits for judges such as presentation templates and discussion guides, volunteering their time and expertise to civic education events, and readily having reference and resource materials for age-appropriate activities and for various education settings. Together, this process can enhance the knowledge, skills, confidence, and opportunities for students to both see themselves in the law and advance democratic norms.

By placing judges at the forefront of civic education efforts, the Michigan Judicial Council aims to create a more informed, engaged citizenry with a deeper understanding of and respect for the judicial system. As judges embrace their role as civic educators and community leaders, they will have the potential to transform public perception of the judiciary from a distant, sometimes intimidating, institution to an accessible, understandable, and vital part of democratic governance. Moreover, students will increasingly see pathways into the legal field increasing the pipeline for careers in the law. Through these efforts, the judicial branch can play a pivotal role in shaping an engaged Michigan that has deeper understanding and awareness of civil responsibility for generations to come.

## **2. Expand Existing Programs to Reach Underserved Populations**

The Expanding Civic Education workgroup has placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that civic education reaches all segments of society, particularly those who have been historically underserved or disengaged. This focus recognizes that true democratic participation requires inclusive educational efforts that address the unique needs, challenges, and perspectives of diverse communities across Michigan.

The workgroup's first step was to identify marginalized and underserved communities in the context of civic education. These include low-income neighborhoods, rural communities, immigrant and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations, multi-language learners, at-risk youth and alternative education students, individuals with disabilities, Native American communities, and elderly populations, particularly those in assisted living facilities.

A key insight from the workgroup's discussions was the need to tailor civic education approaches to local contexts. This involves considering local demographics, local

politics and issues, cultural considerations, and acknowledging how local economic conditions might impact civic engagement and tailoring programs accordingly.

The workgroup recognized that different communities face unique barriers to accessing civic education including transportation, accessibility, language barriers, technology, and a lack of flexibility to name a few. These barriers can be addressed through creative and diverse mechanisms. Removing barriers to entry is critical for any program consideration.

- **Transportation Barriers** - Partnerships could be developed with public transit authorities to provide free or discounted travel to civic education events. Mobile programs could be implemented that travel to remote communities or provide fuel stipends for participants. Stipends could be made available for schools and community organizations to meet their travel needs to attend their designated events.
- **Accessibility** - Programs should seek opportunities to include persons with disabilities. Online (Zoom) events could provide access, especially in rural areas, to more program possibilities. Programs could be supported to include American Sign Language (ASL) and seek technology including loop systems to ensure communities like Deaf and Hard of Hearing are included without additional barriers.
- **Language Barriers** - The judicial branch is familiar with serving those with Limited English proficiency (LEP) and is dedicated to removing language barriers. Materials could be developed and provided for LEP communities and collaboration with LEP programs could assist in the integration of language learning into curricula and is an achievable objective.
- **Technology** - Partnerships with community centers and libraries to access online education resources and offer offline resources to explore solutions for areas with limited internet access could assist those with limited access.
- **Lack of Flexibility** - Programs, events, and opportunities should offer flexible scheduling, which includes evening and weekend programs. This considers that low-income individuals may have atypical work hours and efforts must be made to accommodate all work schedules.

To engage underserved communities effectively, the workgroup emphasized the importance of culturally relevant content, inclusive pedagogy, and delivery methods.

Representation that reflects communities is important for students to see themselves in the law. Diverse representation is important to highlight that all persons have pathways into legal careers. Educational materials should feature diverse voices and experiences, reflecting the makeup of the communities being served. An emphasis on focusing on legal and civic issues that are particularly relevant to each community, such as immigration law for newcomer communities, election law during election seasons, and/or environmental regulations for areas facing environmental challenges. Providing cultural competence and implicit bias training for judges, educators, and other civic education facilitators is important to ensure sensitive and effective communication with diverse communities is paramount for a successful plan and approach.

By focusing on these comprehensive strategies for reaching and engaging underserved communities, the workgroup aims to create a more inclusive and effective civic education landscape. This approach recognizes that true democratic participation requires not just providing information, but actively breaking down barriers, respecting diverse perspectives, and empowering all community members to engage fully in civic life. Most importantly, students need time, space, and educational guidance to *practice* the skills of judicial and legal engagement. We do not teach students to swim or how to ride a bike through only book learning; opportunities to engage, interact, and practice is crucial to developing a healthy civic identity. Through these efforts, the workgroup hopes to foster a more equitable, informed, and engaged citizenry across all of Michigan's diverse communities.

### **3. Expand Current Curricular and Co-Curricular Civic Education Programs and Develop Plans for their Sustainability.**

While the workgroup identified valuable programs that currently exist, the goal is to capitalize on their hard work of building the foundation and expanding to other areas. Mock trials are a great example of a familiar format for judges, with scripted materials at the ready. They provide practical, hands-on experience with the legal system, helping students and participants understand courtroom procedures, the roles of various legal professions, and the intricacies of the legal system. By engaging in simulated court cases, participants gain insight into the judiciary in a way that helps to foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of judicial processes to individuals who might otherwise have limited exposure.

The workgroup recommends training be provided to judicial officers and court administrators on the Mock Trial in a Box toolkit developed by the MCCE as a way to expand mock trial programs across the state. The workgroup recommends that the Judicial Section of the State Bar identifies Civic Education Ambassadors in regions

where existing mock trial programs are not present. Ambassadors could engage local school boards, local bar associations, and other community organizations to utilize the toolkit to set up additional programs. The Mock Trial in a Box toolkit could be adapted to introduce middle school mock trial competitions or include various grade levels.

Additionally, expanding civic education also addresses civic deserts. Like legal deserts, civic deserts or areas that lack of perceived civic opportunities and access to traditional civic institutions exist.<sup>13</sup> Civic education allows young people to meet, discuss issues and address problems while developing their critical thinking skills. Engaging young people through modalities such as Mock Trials and We the People will help to foster interest in civics and the judiciary and bring civic education to communities where those opportunities might not otherwise exist. Additionally, providing curriculum that focuses on Michigan's trial courts and cases from local communities will help to provide a wider understanding of the impact Michigan's trial courts have on their local communities and ways in which those interested in legal careers can serve.

Moreover, the workgroup would also advance opportunities for educators to learn more about the legal system. Models exist from other states and programs that demonstrate the immense impact that additional teacher professional learning has in the classroom and the community. Such professional learning could include highlighted program training. Down the road, greater opportunities for students to engage in intensive programming also would be of benefit.

While Michigan currently has no standard materials, lesson plans, or specific resources that address the state court trial system, other states have made progress in this area. Texas for example has developed the [Taming Texas](#) curriculum which provides a seventh-grade level examination of the history and inner workings of Texas courts. The program is sponsored by the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society and the Texas State Bar Law-Related Education section and provides a textbook and resources for educators. States like Texas have made great advances in securing funding through the legislature and courts to directly fund programs like learning centers, workshops for teachers, and other state specific resources. The MCCE is one of Michigan's most robust resources for civic education but structurally is very fragile because it is contractor based and relies heavily on volunteers to run most of its events. The sustainable work in other states that continue to grow have strong support from their legislatures. Expanding the funding of Michigan specific programs and curriculum would help to bolster existing programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, *How Digital Media Can Mitigate the Consequences of Living in Civic Deserts*, [https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/how-digital-media-can-mitigate-consequences-living-civic-deserts#:~:text="Civic%20deserts%2C"%20a%20new%20term%20coined%20by%20CIRCLE's,opportunities%20and%20access%20to%20traditional%20civic%20institutions.%201](https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/how-digital-media-can-mitigate-consequences-living-civic-deserts#:~:text=), (accessed October 30, 2024).

## Additional Areas for Consideration

In the process of forming their recommendations, the workgroup identified additional issues and resources for consideration. A recent report issued by The Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and the NCSC entitled [Beyond Civics Education: A Health and Wellness Guide for getting our public trust and confidence in shape](#) provides an in-depth look at the gaps between the ways courts see the services they deliver and how the public experiences those services. The report also highlights trends in public discourse and failing public trust, the importance of ethics, accountability and transparency, making community connections and the impact of the media.

The results of the 2023, NCSC commissioned focus groups indicated that concentrating solely on civic education will not enhance trust. *Beyond Civics Education* suggests in holistic manner that to restore trust and confidence in the courts that courts do the following four things:

- First, people need to be reminded that it is state courts that do the vast amount of work.
- Second, state courts must be ethical, accountable and transparent.
- Third, there is not enough public discussion on the transformation work being done by courts in the form of justice reform, and other pushes to bring courts into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Fourth, the courts need to communicate more effectively about their work and their work product to the media.

In the digital age, technology and media offer unprecedented opportunities to expand the reach and impact of civic education initiatives. The workgroup recognized the potential of these tools to engage diverse audiences, particularly younger generations who are digital natives. By embracing innovative technological approaches and media partnerships, the workgroup aims to make civic education more accessible, engaging, and relevant to all Michigan residents.

*“There is a massive gap between how courts see the services they deliver – and how large segments of the public experiences those services.”*

CCJ/COSCA  
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, TRUST AND CONFIDENCE  
COMMITTEE

With younger generations relying on social media and artificial intelligence for information, one approach could be creating a dedicated YouTube channel for the MJC. A deliberate team could produce video tutorials explaining various court processes, legal terms, and civic concepts. The channel could also include “Day in the Life” videos featuring judges, court staff, and community members involved in the judicial system. To further advertise the importance and excitement of mock trials, these could be livestreamed along with explanatory commentary.

Other social media platforms could be utilized such as TikTok, Instagram, or Facebook. Short, engaging videos that explain legal concepts in an entertaining way could assist understanding of the law. Question and answer sessions with judges or legal experts could be utilized to explain various issues that affect the public. Instagram stories and reels can provide quick civic education tips, or there might be a “This Day in Legal History” post. Overall, engaging in discussions about current legal and civic issues will bring these discussions to the forefront and highlight the important work of the judicial branch.

Interactive online platforms might be utilized such as an app that offers daily civic engagement challenges, includes quizzes on constitutional rights, provides virtual tours of courthouses, or offers a civic engagement tracker where users can log their participation in local government activities. Virtual Reality (VR) experiences can be utilized to tour historical sites related to Michigan’s legal history or offer simulations of courtroom experiences, so users have familiarity with court processes and procedures.

Media partnerships can promote the many myriads of positive initiatives that the MJC and local courts are taking in their communities. A local TV station that promotes a “Know Your Courts” segment is an easy mechanism to transfer useful knowledge. A news release or podcast series that features interviews with various legal professionals can highlight experiences with the legal system. A multimedia campaign showcasing the successes of initiatives like automatic set-aside legislation or video testimonials from individuals who have benefited from problem-solving courts is a powerful tool to convey to the public the important work courts perform on a daily basis. This goes above and beyond what the general public likely understands about the courts. To make sure the public understands, these recommendations should be multilingual in order to reach diverse communities and ensure access to both online and offline communities.

By leveraging these technological and media strategies, courts can significantly expand the reach and effectiveness of its civic education initiatives. These approaches not only make civic education more accessible and engaging but also allow for real-time adaptation to the changing needs and interests of Michigan's diverse communities. Through innovative use of technology and media, the Council can foster a more

informed, engaged, and civically active populace, ultimately strengthening the foundation of democracy in Michigan.

Civic education increases and strengthens basic understanding of the court and the court process. The four strategies suggested by the CCJ/COSCA Committee coupled with the recommendations in this report have the potential to enhance 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies and increase accountability, helping the Judiciary in building trust and confidence in the Courts. Continuing to provide education to the public on the roles and responsibilities of the judiciary is work that will never be done.

## Acknowledgments and Work Group Membership

### Acknowledgments

The workgroup would like to thank the Judicial Section of the State Bar for taking the time to hear from the workgroup on this ever-important work. The workgroup would like to thank those who continue to be passionate about civic education, and volunteer and champion the existing programs and foster the next generation of lawyers, judges, and other judicial stakeholders.

### Workgroup Members

Hon. William Baillargeon	57th District Court
Tamara Brubaker-Salcedo	Accurate Interpreters
Darin Day	State Bar of Michigan
Rachael L. Drenovsky	Michigan Supreme Court – Michigan Judicial Institute
Nicole Evans	54B District Court
Hon. Kameshia Gant	6th Circuit Court
Ravynne Gilmore	State Court Administrative Office – Public Information Office
Scott Koenig	Michigan Department of Education Office of Educational Supports
Jane Lo	Michigan State University College of Education
Hon. James Maceroni	16th Circuit Court
Hon. Herman Marable	68th District Court
Justin Roebuck	Ottawa County
Hon. Geno Salomone	23rd District Court
Janice Selberg	State Law Library
Nancy Thane	Tuscola County Probate Court
Tanya Todd	61st District Court
Ellen Zwarenstejn	Michigan Center for Civic Education

## Mock Trial in a Box - A Court Starter Kit

This is an ongoing and enduring project of the Michigan Center for Civic Education. This document will be set for all people to comment so as to ask clarifying questions so we can continue to update the information. This document is for interested legal professionals seeking information to host Mock Trial events with the Michigan Center for Civic Education. Reach out to MCCE at [mocktrial@miciviced.org](mailto:mocktrial@miciviced.org) to get started!

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### About the Michigan Center for Civic Education

The Michigan Center for Civic Education (MCCE) was established in 1982 as a non-partisan 501(C)3 nonprofit corporation. MCCE was created to be a premier organization dedicated to preparing an active and informed citizenry through law-related and civic education in Michigan.

We are dedicated to providing youth with the knowledge and skills needed to become engaged citizens. Learning to swim cannot be done simply by reading a book; a person needs to jump into the water and to get wet. The same is true in regards to learning how to be a responsible, engaged citizen. Students need to have opportunities to practice the skills of citizenship and to interact with members of the community in order to understand how our government works and how they can be actively engaged in the process.

The Michigan Center for Civic Education believes each and every *student* should have access to meaningful civic education to grow active, healthy, and informed communities. All *educators* also deserve access to high quality, supported professional learning to stay current with content and their craft.



## About Mock Trial

Mock Trial has tremendous impact - from student, to evaluator, to the community that hosts an event. This document is written for the Court personnel who wish to lead in civic education through Mock Trial.

### Goals:

- Every single student, teacher, administrator, court administrator, justice, judge, attorney, paralegal, state bar member, and interested community member has the ability to participate and flourish in Mock Trial. Wide enough regional impact that any student in Michigan can access a regional event near their home.
- MCCE's Mock Trial program can provide pathways and talent development for the legal profession. Mock Trial is the vital pipeline for legal profession (Help alleviate legal deserts)
- Communities galvanized around academic programs including Mock Trial
- Students, teachers and legal professionals across the state have opportunities to participate
- Show opportunities for legal professionals including journalists, artists, ASL interpreters, and more

### Model:

Local jurisdictions form host committees to provide important Mock Trial events. These events are called "regionals". MCCE will support local hosts with the administrative infrastructure needed to run the technical components of the event. MCCE will work with local regionals to ensure the best possible event. The regional event will qualify a few teams (based on overall percentage) to participate in the state finals. MCCE will then host a state finals event after all regional events conclude. All regional hosts are encouraged to come volunteer at state finals!

Local host committees may be comprised of:

- Court official, judges, administrative teams at courthouses
- Local Bar Associations and Foundations
- Affinity Bars
- SBM Sections
- Firms
- Schools and educational organizations (ISDs, RESAs, Districts, Universities, etc.)
- Other civic organizations with communication with MCCE



## Community Engagement and Support

- Courthouses - Administrators, Judges, and all
  - Advocate/Support courthouses to provide space
  - One day a year for a local regional (usually a Saturday, could also be a weekday)
  - Work with judges to secure use of courtrooms and other spaces in the building
  - Work with administrator or designated person for day before set up, event day function, and clean up (See host checklist)
  - Take note of courthouse and courtroom set up (ensure jury space, chairs for 3 witnesses, 3 attorneys, artist, journalist, etc. Take pictures for later use to ensure courthouse is returned to specification.
  - Volunteer Recruitment & Communications
  - Promote event and recruit volunteers, begins in August each year
  - Volunteer registration to open November 1
  - Opportunities for volunteers to host clinics in the area and other education outreach
  - Work with MCCE staff to track volunteer registrants and continue to recruit volunteers
- Schools
  - Team Toolkit
  - Support and promote local clinics
  - Recruit volunteer coaches to support new and existing teams
  - Case Materials and rules published in October, teams begin to register in November
  - Monthly coaches roundtables - opportunities for coaches/teachers to meet each other and ask questions on all things mock trial related. Support.
- Costs
  - MCCE currently charges \$350 per team.
  - Teams also need to organize funding for transportation, meals, meeting materials
  - Scholarships to be available for schools without support
  - Actual cost to run current programs is upwards of \$190,000.
  - MCCE is appreciative to the courthouses that provide security and custodial services



## Engaging Schools and Teams

- Outreach to schools.
  - In an ideal world, court administrators, judges, and school administrators work together to promote Mock Trial.
  - Administrators, school board members, educators, parents/guardians, and students may initiate teams. Every school has a different style of champions therefore outreach to schools may engage multiple levels of stakeholders.
  - Superintendents, principles, curriculum directors, engagement and outreach persons, and educators are typically best for initial contact.
- Teams are 6-12 students from same school or civic/community organization where there are no schools participating
- No cap currently on number of teams - but may split regionals if greater than 2 teams
- No cap on number of Journalist and Artist entries
- Next Steps to engage schools -
  - Send Team Toolkit to teacher, principals, superintendents and others in your community
  - Recruit attorneys to be coaches and mentors



## Division of Responsibilities

<p><b>Michigan Center for Civic Education</b></p> <p>MCCE is the Statewide Organization that Oversees Oversight and Infrastructure for Mock Trial. In addition to Mock Trial, MCCE works to develop professional learning and student programs in multiple areas of civic and law-related education.</p>	<p><b>Host</b></p> <p>Any committed group of people and/or organization(s) can host. Hosts can be Bar Associations, Affinity Bars, Foundations, Judges, Civic Organizations, schools/universities, etc. Hosts are responsible for all the local components and ensuring an amazing experience for volunteers and schools.</p>
<p>MCCE annually develops and publishes the case materials, updated rules and training videos</p> <p>MCCE takes lead on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Annual tournament logistics</li> <li>● Setting up and overseeing registration and rules</li> <li>● Case writing (with aid of committee)</li> <li>● Tabulation</li> <li>● Awards and Certificates- collaboration with local Bar Foundation is encouraged</li> <li>● Event Program creation (local printing is ideal)</li> <li>● Monthly Coaches Roundtables</li> <li>● Clinics</li> <li>● All National Mock Trial dues and responsibilities</li> <li>● Logistical assistance for National Mock Trial - team, artist, and journalist</li> </ul> <p>MCCE supports every event by running all tabulation through Tabroom.com. MCCE will utilize Tabroom to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Register teams</li> <li>● Register volunteers</li> <li>● Tabulate results</li> <li>● Communicate results to local hosts</li> </ul> <p>Facilitate MCCE Mock Trial Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The committee is open to everyone who is interested in all aspects of mock trial (Board members plus interested community members - only limitation is that if someone is coaching, they cannot be part of case writing).</li> <li>● Committee takes the lead on case writing and oversees several logistical questions from eligibility questions, case clarifications, onsite dispute resolution, and related questions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regular communication with Courthouse for scheduling and logistics</li> <li>● Date Commitment, one event from mid-Feb through early March</li> <li>● Recruit volunteers to execute day of event             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Presiding Judges</li> <li>● Scoring Judges</li> <li>● Court Officers</li> <li>● Artist and Journalist evaluators</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Help recruit schools in the area</li> </ul> <p><b>Location Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Secure and set up spaces available for use. Minimum space needs:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3 courtrooms is the minimum number to run a regional (for 6 teams),</li> <li>● Additional courtrooms as needed by regional demand (1 courtroom for every two teams)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Larger assembly/conference room for             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place for morning registration (and/or place to gather)</li> <li>● Awards presentation</li> <li>● Location for students to eat lunch and gather as needed</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Volunteer Orientation Spaces.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scoring and Presiding Judge Orientation - AM and PM</li> <li>● Facilitator Orientation (can share with judges)</li> <li>● Timekeeper Orientation (may be courtroom)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Event Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Registration tables             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schools</li> <li>● Volunteers</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Volunteer breakfast</li> <li>● Volunteer lunch</li> <li>● Wifi needed on site</li> <li>● Local print access appreciated</li> <li>● Custodial services</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Event Logistics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small volunteer crew to help with set up, registration, and cleanup</li> <li>• MCCE welcomes hosts to collaborate with clinics and other local educational awareness and training opportunities</li> </ul> <p>Local Press and Other Civic Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local press release in advance of</li> <li>• Local press release</li> </ul>
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Area of Need	Timeline	Notes
Courthouse Spaces	August - Initial plan in place November - Confirm location capacities January - Location names for programs to MCCE	1 - 2 Large gathering spaces 6-12 Courtrooms 2-3 Volunteer training areas Team location for lunches
Security	November - Confirm plan with MCCE January - provide any notes to send to teams to MCCE	It is up to the courthouse how much security to provide for the event. MCCE will supply name tags and check in processes to be used to manage crowds
Meals	November - Outline initial plan January - Order food	Volunteers - provide light am refreshments and a lunch between rounds 2 and 3 Teams - If a funder can be found, MCCE is open to feeding all students together. Otherwise teams bring in their own, or order nearby/on-site
Volunteers	September - Save the Dates published October - Case and rules published November - Volunteer registration opens December - Virtual trainings begin January - Final recruitment push May - follow up with volunteers for feedback	Local support for distributing volunteer recruitment materials is critical. MCCE will provide flyers, templates and language. MCCE will manage the volunteer registration platform, and will work individually with courthouses to share data throughout the process.
Teams/Students	September - Recruitment October - Case released November - Registration Opens December - Clinics and Scrimmages January - Regionals assigned	Local hosts supporting teams is a great way to build strong regionals. MCCE can provide templates and guidance for supporting new teams. MCCE will manage registration for teams.
Media		



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## Resource Links

Team Guide - How to start a team

MCCE website: <https://miciviced.org/>

- > Programs
- > Current Partners
- > Mock Trial

Current Rules - 2023-2024 - Michigan Mock Trial Rules and Procedures 2023-2024

Examples of Cases

Civil from 2023-2024 2023-2024 Tomte v Earhart Case File Jan 17, 2024

Criminal from 2022-2023

Civil from 2021-2022

National Mock Trial 2022 - <https://nhsmtc.org/>

Youtube Page - @michigancenterforciviceduc7355

Facebook and Instagram - @miciviced

## Example Current Regional Event Schedule

Time	Event
7:45 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.	Team Registration Observer Registration
7:45 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Volunteer Check In
8:00 a.m. - 8:35 a.m.	Volunteer Orientations Begin Judges Court Officer/Facilitator
8:15 a.m.	School Time Keeper Orientation
8:45 a.m.	Round One
10:35 a.m.	Volunteers Return to Tabulation
11:00 a.m.	Round Two
12:45 p.m.	Volunteers Return to Tabulation
12:45 p.m.	Lunch
12:00 p.m.	P.M. Volunteers: Registration, Lunch, and Orientation
2:00 p.m.	Round Three
4:00 p.m.	Volunteers Final Tabulation Verification
4:30 p.m.	Reflection and Recognitions Award Presentations



## Program Planning Annual Timeline

When planning to host an event, this timeframe might be helpful for organization.

### Generic Michigan Schedule

<b>May-Aug</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Development</li> <li>• Courthouse Communications</li> <li>• Survey Teams &amp; Volunteers from prior year</li> <li>• Recruit Court Admin, Chief Judges, Academic Leadership</li> <li>• Release Tentative Schedule</li> </ul>
<b>August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retreat - multi- day event to orient new coaches, review draft updates to rules and procedures, connect and collaborate with staff and volunteers.</li> <li>• Update rules and procedures</li> <li>• Finalize dates</li> </ul>
<b>September</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual dates, clinics, and trainings calendar published</li> <li>• Start Save the Dates with Volunteers</li> <li>• Start Save the Dates with Schools</li> <li>• Coaches roundtable begins</li> </ul>
<b>October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MCCE releases the case materials and any rules or procedure updates</li> <li>• Team registration opens</li> <li>• Volunteer registration opens</li> <li>• Coaches roundta</li> </ul>
<b>Oct - Dec</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community clinics</li> <li>• Coaches roundtable</li> </ul>
<b>Early January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team registration deadline</li> <li>• Confirmation of regional</li> </ul>
<b>Late January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Memberships are Due (for programs, certificates, etc.)</li> <li>• Courtroom Artist and Courtroom Journalism Registration</li> </ul>
<b>Late February through Mid March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional competitions Saturdays in February and March.</li> <li>• Teams who advance out of their regional compete in Lansing for State Finals.</li> <li>• Number of teams advancing is a proportion of total teams entered against teams at the tournament (and courtroom availability)</li> </ul>
<b>Mid-Late March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A State Finals competition is held</li> <li>• Reception held evening before state finals</li> </ul>
<b>Early May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National competition is held in various places across the country (bid through NHSMTCC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2022 - Kalamazoo</li> <li>• 2023 - Little Rock</li> <li>• 2024 - Wilmington, DE</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



- 2025 - Phoenix
- 2026 - Des Moines
- The team, artist, and journalist who finish first at State, have the opportunity to represent Michigan at Nationals.

## Form Letters

### Follow Up:

**MCCCE to develop Form Letters for the following Interested Parties**

### Dear Court Administrator,

The Michigan Center for Civic Education runs a statewide high school Mock Trial program and we are bringing it to your courthouse. Below is a basic outline of the yearly program schedule and the potential uses for your courthouse. Additionally there are details about the specific events in Feb and March. If you would like to connect me with a staff person who can talk through this model with me, I can see how your courthouse would align in our programs.

I look forward to connecting soon. Thank you again for your support of legal education and the Michigan Center for Civic Education

### MCCCE High School Mock Trial Program Timeline

Sept – October - Schools organize teams

November – January – Teams practice, use local courtroom 1-2 times per month for practice

February – March – Regional tournaments Full days Saturday 7 am- 5 pm

3rd Saturday in March – State Finals – 10 – 12 teams advance from regional tournaments to Finals

### Regional and State Tournament Courthouse needs

#### Friday – 3 pm

- Access to courthouse to set up materials

#### Saturday 7 am – 5 pm

- 150 - 250 students, volunteers and observers attend
- 5 – 8 courtrooms (depending on the regional event, average needed is 6)

### Meeting spaces

- Jury room or other large conference room for teams to gather for the awards session in the afternoon (100-150)
- Conference room to train volunteers, gather scores and serve volunteer lunch (25-50)
- Desired but not required – additional training and meeting space for private or sensitive conversations (7-10)

### Meals

- Local restaurants within walking or driving distance
- Space in building for teams to eat packed or ordered lunch
- If there is a cafeteria, we are happy to coordinate use in an advantageous way



## Dear Teacher,

The Michigan Center for Civic Education runs a statewide high school Mock Trial program and we are bringing it to **YOUR REGION**! We are being hosted by the 13th Circuit Court and the 86th District Court in Suttons Bay on Thursday, February 22nd, 2024! We want to extend this opportunity to students at Grayling High School. See the attached Northern Michigan Invitation for more details on the date and location!

We hope you will consider bringing this local opportunity to the students at Grayling! I would love to set up a zoom meeting this week or next to talk more about our program. If you send me a couple times that work for you in the next two weeks and I set up a call.

A Mock Trial team consists of 6 to 12 students who will prepare both sides of a case. This year's case will be announced on October 19th via zoom and a recording will be posted to our YouTube Channel! The students prepare their roles and then compete against 4-6 teams in their region. The prevailing team from the regional will advance to state finals on March 23rd in Lansing. This is the 2023/24 Season Launch Memo that includes dates and 2023/24 details. It also includes a link to the Mock Trial Information Packet that has all the details on how to start a team. MCCE Mock Trial is a part of the National High School Mock Trial Championship, the national network of statewide Mock Trial programs.

MCCE runs a variety of K-12 programs including We The People, Project Community and we support coalition work around MiVote Matters, the MiCivics Coalition. We also partner with MDE and schools to provide professional development for teachers across the state. If you have any interest in learning more about those opportunities please let me know.

## Dear Volunteer,

I am reaching out today with a volunteer opportunity to share with attorneys, paralegals and law firms in your area. As you may know the State Bar of Michigan champions the Michigan Center for Civic Education High School Mock Trial Program as a critical pipeline and civic education program.

More than 60 teams from schools all across Michigan will attend a Regional Event between in February and March! The top teams at these regional events advance to State Finals in Lansing! We need 50 to 100 volunteers at each regional event to make these programs run smoothly. Can you help us? Please share this volunteer and event information.

### Volunteers Needed for High School Mock Trial

The Michigan Center for Civic Education is seeking dedicated legal and legal adjacent professionals to support their **YEAR** High School Mock Trial competition. They need Attorneys, judges, law students and those fluent in the law to serve as presiding and scoring judges. Your time will make a positive impact on the lives of students! Please volunteer to support students as they learn more about the law in simulated courtroom experiences as attorneys, witnesses, and now Courtroom Artists and Journalists.

## **Appendix B – Additional Civic Education Resources**

[Beyond Civics Education | NCSC](#)

[Center for Civic Education](#)

[City of Holland](#)

[Civic Season - It's time to create a new kind of tradition \(thecivicseason.com\)](#)

[Court Community Connections program](#)

[iCivics](#)

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