

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:

The WALs Foundation Mock Trials at _____

Recognizing that all children are at-risk for juvenile delinquency behavior, The WALs (Wheeling Academy of Law and Science) Foundation has designed a mock trial project that brings the system of American justice to life as it addresses the subject of substance abuse, most recently prescription drug abuse. The West Virginia Department of Education Next Generation Content Standard and Objective (SS.PD.5.C) for teachers that states “students will assume a role in a mock trial” can also be completed.

The goal of the Foundation is to demonstrate the objective of justice and workings of our civil and criminal justice system by allowing students to act out the roles of lawyers, witnesses, jurors and more, based on factual case scenarios (scripts) prepared by the Foundation. The scripts portray the unfortunate circumstances that can occur when the choice is made to abuse drugs, leading right up to a day in court where the defendant’s future depends on the decision of twelve strangers who have been chosen to decide his/her fate.

“Prescription drug abuse came on the scene several years ago and our scripts reflected this issue as it was emerging. It has become a huge problem in an epidemic stage in West Virginia among our youth today,” says Barbara Knutsen, Executive Director of the WALs Foundation. “The goal of this project is to educate students about the dangers of prescription drug abuse through innovative, creative and active participation in the demonstration process.”

This trial is a criminal case and it involves teens taking another person’s prescription drugs, crashing the car and one person dying in the accident. The other two teens involved find themselves being charged with possession, distribution and involuntary manslaughter. Unfortunately, it’s a real life scenario. All students participate – they are the ones that decide the fate of these defendants.

The mock trial takes place on two consecutive days in the classroom. All West Virginia 5th grade teachers receive an invitation to participate and information on how to access the established web based program that includes a teachers manual, resources, dvd’s along with paper gavel bracelets for students that teachers just simply: print out – cut out – hand out! On the first day, teachers or guest speakers present pre-trial discussion, talk about the prescription drug problem in WV and its negative effects, pass out student handouts, and explain the steps in a trial in detail, along with a short rehearsal of the script to make the students comfortable with where they sit/stand for each part.

On the second day, a volunteer lawyer _____ plays the role of Judge, and students wear appropriate props for their mock trial roles. After completion of the trial, students participate in a question and answer series with the “Judge” and receive the paper gavel bracelets that read: ‘I participated in a mock trial to KNOCK OUT DRUGS!’

Over 13,000 students, in 12 WV counties, participated in the mock trial project since 2004 before expanding in 2013 to all 20,000+ West Virginia 5th grade students. The West Virginia Department of Education distributes information to all West Virginia 5th grade teachers inviting them to participate in an established web based program that will help satisfy the Next Generation Standard and Objective in social studies.

TEACHERS - YOU CAN USE THIS BY CALLING AHEAD AND REQUESTING SOMEONE ATTEND FROM YOUR LOCAL PAPER, RADIO OR TV STATION OR YOU CAN ALSO SUBMIT THIS RELEASE, A PICTURE FROM THE MOCK TRIAL THAT INCLUDES APPROPRIATE NAMES AND YOUR SCHOOL, AFTER THE MOCK TRIAL