



NEWS RELEASE

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Education Program Works to Boost Civics Education *Decrease in Civics Education Impacts Future Community Involvement*

The Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has teamed up with California State University, San Marcos to provide an innovative program called “*California On My Honor: Civics Institute for Teachers*” to help educators capture student attention and bring the importance of law and civic responsibility to the classroom. The four-day institute, which has attracted teachers from throughout the state, will kick off on August 8th. Three days of study regarding civics education will take place on the Cal State San Marcos campus and at the North County Superior Courthouse in Vista. The fourth day will be a follow-up session held in San Francisco at the Earl Warren Building on October 26, 2007.

The program is open to teachers (K through 12 grades) and helps them learn new and stimulating ways to teach a civics-related social studies program, specifically as it relates to judicial processes as defined by state academic standards. Twenty-five teachers from all regions of the state were selected to attend the institute which will include judges, lawyers and college educators. The professional development program includes learning to bring civics-related social studies programs to life through the use of simulation, visual/performing arts, language arts and teacher collaboration in curriculum development. Resources and law-related program opportunities from different regions of the state will be shared with participants.

Boosting the teaching of civics courses has gained more importance as national studies continue to show an increasing number of high school students and college students lack basic understanding of government and civics-related issues. A University of Connecticut study shows a majority of college students scored poorly on a [civics literacy exam](#).

(More)

Dr. Fran Chadwick of California State University at San Marcos, College of Education, and director of the outreach program says, "We have selected some of the top teachers in the state to participate in this very unique opportunity. Educators will use this valuable time offered by the court to increase their understanding of civics education and apply their understanding through effective lesson design. This institute is part of a larger movement meant to increase civic engagement and understanding. We are operating from an important "big idea," The strength of a democracy is equal to the strength of its citizens. The collaboration between educators and judicial officers will definitely strengthen our efforts toward a knowledgeable and involved citizenry. This is exciting work!"

The Institute is the latest development of the "On My Honor" student outreach program created by San Diego Superior Court Judge Richard G. Cline with the assistance of several teachers. The program which exposes elementary and middle school students to the courts through class curriculum and mock trials has been presented regularly in the Vista court since 1999.

"The courts too frequently find that people of all ages do not have an accurate understanding of the value and workings of the third branch of government. This Institute, which targets teachers, is one small step on the part of the courts to provide the people of California with accurate information about the court system and the administration of justice," says Judge Cline.

Last year, the teacher-based "On My Honor Institute" was created by a partnership of the San Diego Superior Court (Vista Branch), the Bar Association of North San Diego County and Cal State University, San Marcos. The Administrative Office of the Courts recognized the potential of the Institute as a statewide project and became an active participant and the financial sponsor of the current Institute.

(Note: On Thursday [8/9/07] at 12:30 P.M. there will be a lesson which includes visual art with civics, and Friday between 8:45 am and 12:00 pm teachers will be engaged in a couple of different lessons which will involve role plays and theatre. These sessions will be in Kellogg Library, Room 5102 at Cal State San Marcos.)