

2021-2025

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT



ORANGE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

BRINGING JUDICIAL OFFICERS TO THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

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ORANGE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

2021-2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE

LEGACY INSIGHT: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Orange County Superior Court proudly presents its inaugural 2021-2025 Community Engagement Report. During this period, the Court continued its mission to bring justice closer to our communities. Through robust educational programs, public outreach, and volunteer efforts, we strived to increase access to justice, inspire civic participation, and foster trust in our judicial system. This proud tradition, fully embraced by our judicial officers and court administration, aligns with the court's Strategic Plan to foster community engagement and educational outreach. We are proud to share the highlights and impact of these initiatives.

This report celebrates the remarkable success of efforts inspired by the Judicial Council of California's Power of Democracy (POD) initiative, established by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and then-State Superintendent Tom Torlakson. Rooted in Standard 10.5, which emphasizes the judiciary's role in the community, this initiative led to the creation of the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning, sparking a statewide effort to enhance civic education. Building on this momentum, Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero revitalized the initiative in 2023 under the new name—the Judicial Branch Power of Democracy Civic Learning Initiative.

In 2022, the Orange County Superior Court undertook a significant restructuring of its community engagement and outreach efforts allowing expanded outreach and better alignment with the needs of our community. What had previously been a series of independent and ad hoc initiatives was formally unified under the newly established Orange County Superior Court Community Engagement Committee, which now leads 15 impactful programs. The Court carries out this initiative locally by engaging judicial officers, lawyers, law students, and court ambassadors in programs that expand access to justice, create educational opportunities that foster discussions on law and civic engagement. These efforts reach across Orange County, connecting communities with the justice system and empowering individuals to become informed and engaged citizens.

Today, the Orange County Superior Court proudly stands as a leader in community engagement across the state consistently, "Bringing judicial officers to the communities we serve."



Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge

OUR PURPOSE

The Orange County Superior Court offers a variety of educational programs designed for students from kindergarten through law school, including those with special needs. These programs include the **Journey Through Justice Court Tour Program, Judges in the Classroom, Juvenile Justice Education Together, Read Across America, All Rise Student Mentor Program, Civic Leadership Conference, Mock Trial, and Peer Court.**

The Court also provides initiatives tailored for adults, focusing on understanding court procedures, exploring careers within the judicial branch, and fostering fairness and impartiality in the legal system. These include the **Judicial Mentor Program, Judicial Extern Program, Leadership Academy, Juror Appreciation** initiatives, the **Day on the Bench Program** for legislators, and opportunities to host foreign dignitaries from around the globe.

These outreach efforts reflect both a countywide and international commitment to broadening and deepening the Court's engagement with diverse communities, promoting justice, and fostering mutual understanding across cultures and borders.



JUDGE RANDY K. LADISKY AND COMMISSIONER JOE B. DANE
PARTICIPATING IN A CAREER FAIR FOR BEATTY MIDDLE SCHOOL

JOURNEY THROUGH JUSTICE

COURT TOUR PROGRAM

The mission of the Journey Through Justice Court Tour Program is to teach respect for the United States and the State of California Constitutions and the rule of law. It also serves to foster a positive perception of the court and the legal profession.

The court tour program takes students from the classroom to the courtroom, allowing them to witness first-hand the administration of justice. Each tour can accommodate 15 to 50 students and takes place throughout the school year, from October through June.



What Participants Will Learn During the Court Tour:

- **Understanding Crime Classification:** Gain a clear understanding of the different levels of crimes—infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies—and how they are prosecuted within the judicial system.
- **Courtroom Procedures in Action:** Observe real court proceedings to see how cases unfold and decisions are made, providing a firsthand look at the justice system.
- **Roles in the Justice System:** Meet professionals from the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, and the Orange County Sheriff's Department to learn how each agency contributes to maintaining law and order.
- **Hands-On Legal Experience:** Participate in a scripted mock trial where students will take on roles such as judge, attorney, witness, courtroom clerk, or bailiff, gaining an interactive understanding of courtroom dynamics. (Coming Soon)
- **Career Pathways in Law:** Discover the educational requirements and pathways to a variety of careers within the judicial system, from legal professions to law enforcement.
- **Life Lessons from a Judicial Officer:** Hear from a judicial officer who will discuss the real-world legal consequences of actions, offering invaluable insights on responsibility and decision-making.

This experience is designed to educate, inspire, and provide participants with a deeper appreciation for the workings of the judicial system.

5,700

Students have participated in Court Tours since 2021



**Santiago Charter School visiting
Central Justice Center**

“They did a wonderful job, and it was nice for our students to interact with their community members in the courthouse. Our tour guides were very kind and knowledgeable, and everyone who interacted with our students left a positive impact.”

**-Diana P., Teacher
Fryberger Elementary School**



*COMMISSIONER SUSAN M. LEE WITH A GROUP OF GIRL SCOUTS
VISITING HARBOR JUSTICE CENTER*

**Fryberger Elementary visiting
Stephen K. Tamura - West Justice Center**



“My students absolutely LOVED being able to speak to 3 different judges. They were pleasantly surprised to find that they were friendly and willing to talk about their experiences, and encouraging them to ask questions.”

**-Elizabeth M., Teacher
Vista Meridian Global Academy**

COURT AMBASSADORS

The Superior Court of Orange County, serving a population of over three million, hosts diverse groups, including students, foreign dignitaries, and community organizations from around the world. The Court Ambassadors help enhance visitors' understanding of the Court's operations, history, and pivotal role as the third-largest trial court in California.

To support this initiative, we have recruited a dedicated team of 21 volunteer Court Ambassadors, including retired judicial officers, former Grand Jury members, retired teachers, and college students. These ambassadors serve as representatives of the Court, providing educational experiences that highlight the justice system's functions and the Court's community impact to those who visit.



Court Ambassador Don Vivrette

By fostering meaningful engagement, the Court Ambassadors promote an appreciation for the judiciary's essential role in society. This initiative reflects the Court's commitment to community outreach and public education, offering visitors a unique and enriching experience.



Court Ambassador Doug Gillen



JUDGE ROBERT J. GOODKIN AND STUDENTS POSE ON THE BENCH FOLLOWING A COURT TOUR.



JUDGE SHEILA O. RECIO WITH A GROUP OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VISITING WEST JUSTICE CENTER FOR A COURT TOUR.

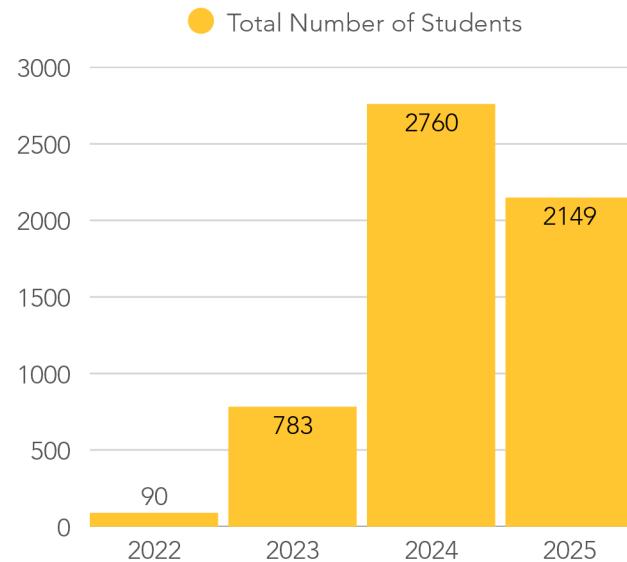
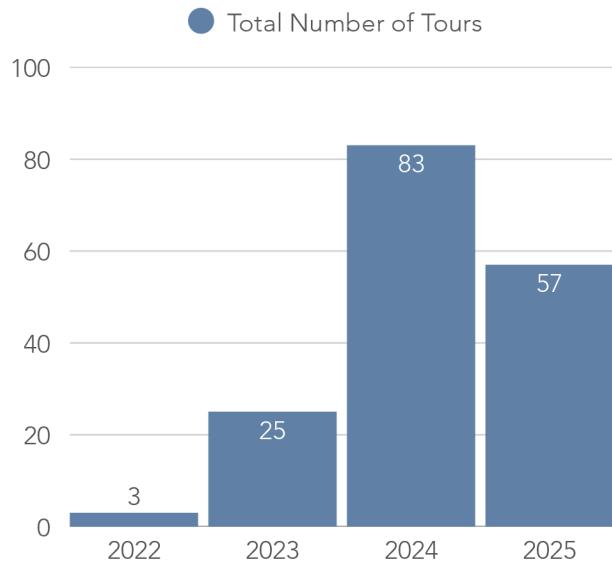


JUDGE LEWIS W. CLAPP SPEAKING TO CYPRESS HIGH SCHOOLS STUDENTS VISITING CENTRAL JUSTICE CENTER FOR A COURT TOUR.



REFLECTING ON 2021-2025

JOURNEY THROUGH JUSTICE COURT TOUR DATA



The bar graphs illustrate the significant growth in participation and engagement in the Journey Through Justice Court Tour Program over the past four years:

Total Number of Tours (Blue Bar Chart):

- 2022: Only 3 tours were conducted, marking the initial phase of the program.
- 2023: The program expanded significantly, hosting 25 tours, an increase of over 8 times compared to 2022.
- 2024: Engagement surged further with 83 tours, a more than 3-fold increase from 2023 and nearly 28 times the number in 2022.
- 2025: A total of 57 tours across 4 justice centers were conducted with referrals to the Judges in the Classroom program for students unable to come to the Court and implementation of prescheduled dates to accommodate more schools.

Total Number of Students (Yellow Bar Chart):

- 2022: A modest start with 90 students participating.
- 2023: Participation grew to 783 students, an almost 9-fold increase from 2022.
- 2024: The program experienced explosive growth, reaching 2,760 students, over 3.5 times the 2023 figure and an astounding 30 times the 2022 numbers.
- 2025: A total of 2,149 students participated in Court Tours this year.

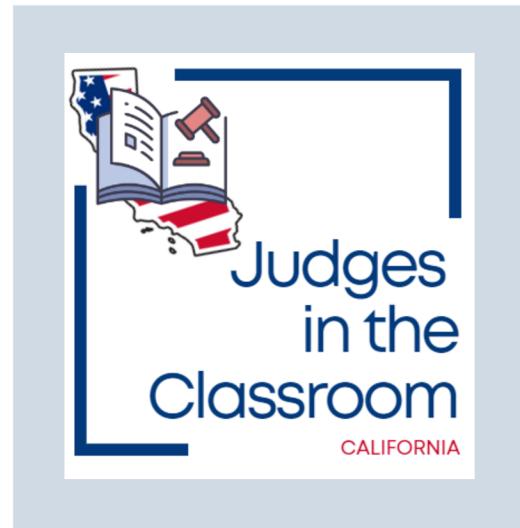
Key Insights:

- The program has shown exponential growth in both the number of tours and student participants over the three years.
- A total of approximately 5,700 students have participated in Court Tours the last three years.

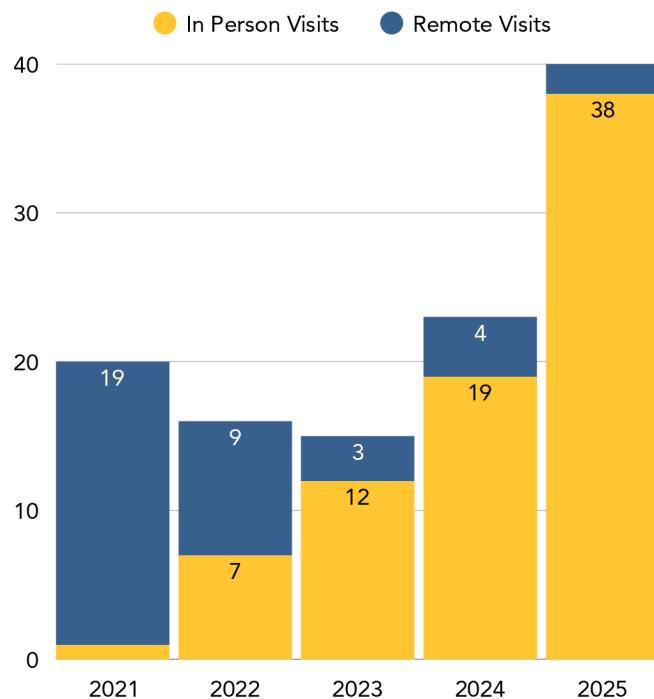
JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM

In 2020, Orange County Superior Court was one of eleven counties in California selected to participate in piloting a new program called Judges in the Classroom (JIC). The Judges in the Classroom program pairs judicial officers with K-12 teachers for virtual or in-person visits. These one-hour lessons engage students in law-related civics topics such as the Role of Judges, the U.S. Constitution, Rule of Law, and Historical Milestones in our democracy. This program offers a unique opportunity to enrich students' understanding of civics through interactive and informative discussions with experienced legal professionals.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Judges in the Classroom program was modified to provide lessons remotely via Zoom. The majority of the visits are now in person, however, virtual presentation are still made available. In order to increase the program's reach, the Court launched a marketing campaign to superintendents, principals, and teachers throughout Orange County in the 2023-2024 school year.



In Person and Remote Visits



The bar data reflects the Court's adaptive efforts in community engagement as it transitioned out of COVID-19 restrictions. From 2021 to 2025, in-person visits steadily increased, demonstrating a strong commitment to reestablishing direct connections with the community. Remote visits also played a vital role during this period, ensuring consistent engagement while accommodating ongoing health and safety considerations. By 2025, our judicial officers were able to visit 112 schools, helping demystify the justice system and encourage student engagement with civics.

JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM DATA

Our judicial officers completed a total of 128 visits across Orange County, visiting different schools either in person or remotely. We were able to provide interactive, educational lessons on the role of judges, insight about their path to the bench, and the judicial branch. Additionally, some judicial officers also participated in school events such as mock trials, Career Days, or administering student leadership oaths.

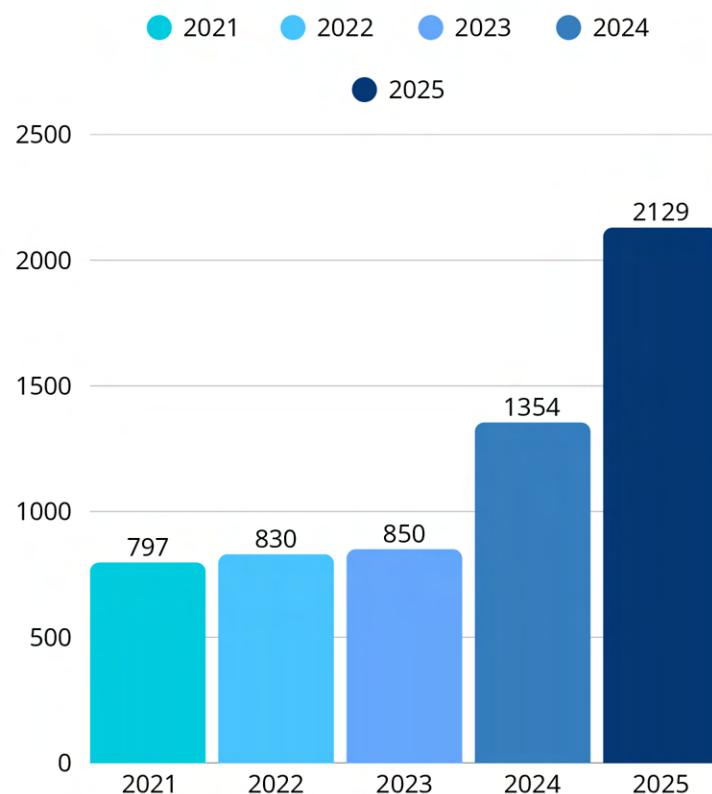
Teachers submit requests for a judicial officer to visit through the Power of Democracy website. Visits typically last for about an hour and are tailored to grade level and topic.

"Judge Giller was an outstanding guest speaker. It was easy for the students, second language learners and many are the children of immigrants, to relate to Judge Giller. Her presentation was of high interest to the students.

She made Constitutional law much more understandable for them than I could ever do. She had exactly the correct delivery, she was very personable and responsive to her audience."

**-Linda H., Teacher
Garfield Elementary School**

Total Number of Students



COMMISSIONER JOE B. DANE VISITING A SCHOOL IN SAN CLEMENTE FOR A JUDGES IN THE CLASSROOM VISIT.

COMMEMORATING THE LANDMARK DECISION 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Equal Access to Justice and Prevention of Bias Committee

The Orange County Superior Court's Equal Access to Justice and Prevention of Bias Committee, chaired by the Hon. Richard Y. Lee, is dedicated to ensuring impartiality and reducing bias in the judicial system. The Court has launched a diversity and inclusion initiative, collaborating with legal aid organizations and bar associations to support less experienced and underrepresented attorneys. It also offers educational workshops, forums, and promotional efforts to deepen understanding of individual experiences while continuously improving engagement with diverse communities to better serve all court users.

In February 2024, the Court partnered with the Orange County Bar Association (OCBA), the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association (TMBA), and Chapman University's Fowler School of Law to host a collaborative and inspiring event commemorating the 70th anniversary of the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education.

The event featured a re-enactment of key arguments from the landmark Brown v. Board case, with an all-star cast, including Justice Martin Jenkins as narrator and Justice Kathleen O'Leary as Chief Justice Warren. Cheryl Brown-Henderson, daughter of Rev. Oliver Brown, joined a panel discussion with Justice Richard T. Fields, Professor Lawrence Rosenthal, and attorney Jack B. Clarke, Jr., to reflect on the historical significance of the decision and its ongoing relevance in today's society.



LINGUISTICS ON TRIAL: RACE, LANGUAGE AND THE LAW

Equal Access to Justice and Prevention of Bias Committee

In February 2025, the Orange County Superior Court partnered with the Orange County Bar Association (OCBA), the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association (TMBA), and the University of California, Irvine School of Law to host another collaborative event titled, "Linguistics on Trial: Race, Language and The Law."

The program featured a compelling presentation by Dr. Sharese King, who explored the growing issue of bias against speakers of non-standard English—a problem distinct from challenges faced by non-English speakers. While courts routinely provide translators for individuals who do not speak English, Dr. King highlighted the lack of clear remedies or accommodations for court users whose English differs from standardized norms.

Dr. King explained how judges, attorneys, jurors, and other court participants often unknowingly harbor biases when hearing non-standard English. These biases can lead to assumptions about a speaker's education, intelligence, or credibility, ultimately influencing courtroom outcomes. She illustrated these dynamics through the prominent example of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and its role in public perception and courtroom interpretation during the George Zimmerman trial in the death of Trayvon Martin.

Following the presentation, attendees broke into small discussion groups led by facilitators, allowing participants to reflect on Dr. King's research, examine their own implicit biases, and consider practical steps for addressing linguistic bias within the justice system.



JUDGE MICHELE BELL MODERATING A GROUP DISCUSSION DURING THE PROGRAM.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER DR. SHARESE KING CONDUCTING HER PRESENTATION

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION, ORANGE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP

Collaborative Programs with External Justice Partners

The Orange County Superior Court partners with the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Orange County (CRF-OC), to bring the Mock Trial and Peer Court Programs to life each year. This collaborative effort thrives thanks to the dedication of our judicial officers who proudly volunteer their time and expertise to support these impactful programs. Together, we provide students with opportunities and facilities to engage in meaningful, hands-on civic education while fostering a deeper understanding of the judicial process and the importance of active citizenship.



JUDGE CRAIG E. ARTHUR MODERATING A STUDENT MOCK TRIAL

**CRF-OC Programs Supported by
the Orange County Superior
Court Through Judicial
Volunteers and Facility Access
Include:**

- Mock Trial
- Peer Court



Mock Trial

This innovative civic education initiative, driven by CRF-OC, the CRF-OC Judicial Advisory Board, and a dedicated network of volunteer attorneys, judges, and educators, engages over 900 high school students annually from more than 40 local schools. Students collaborate with attorney coaches and teachers to analyze a hypothetical criminal court case, develop trial strategies, and assume roles in trial proceedings.

Supported by over 30 volunteer judges, the program helps students deepen their understanding of the judicial system and develop critical skills such as communication, teamwork, and ethical reasoning. By connecting students with legal professionals as role models, the program inspires the next generation of civic leaders and engaged citizens.

Peer Court

Peer Court, a partnership between the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Orange County (CRF-OC), and the Orange County Superior Court, is a juvenile crime diversion program focused on education, accountability, and community engagement. It offers first-time, non-violent juvenile offenders an opportunity for rehabilitation while providing high school students with a hands-on learning experience.

Sessions, held virtually and on school campuses, feature judges presiding over cases, attorneys serving as advisors, and students acting as jurors to assign constructive sanctions. Audience participants engage in an interactive curriculum, gaining insights into the justice system and the importance of responsible decision-making. This program reflects a commitment to restorative justice, civic education, and youth empowerment.



DAY ON THE BENCH PROGRAM

The Day on the Bench (DOTB) Program brings a legislator to a court in his or her district for a half-day visit and tour. Each visit is individually tailored and designed to give legislators a personal understanding of the volume, complexity, and variety of a judge's daily duties and responsibilities, as well as the extensive responsibilities of court clerks and administrators. This program is designed to impress upon legislators the significant role played by the courts and the justice system, their impact on the daily lives of our citizens, and the need for legislative support. The intention is that a deeper appreciation of the complex responsibilities of the Courts will inform legislative decision-making.

MISSION OF DAY ON THE BENCH PROGRAM

- Build effective working relationships between California's judiciary and Legislature.
- Effectively convey judicial branch issues through direct communications between judicial officers, court leaders, and legislators.
- Provide an opportunity for legislators and their staff to observe the magnitude, complexity, working conditions, and variety of responsibilities in the judicial branch.



Senator Thomas J. Umberg's Visit to Costa Mesa Justice Complex

JUROR APPRECIATION COMMITTEE

Established by the California Legislature in 1998, Juror Appreciation Week is celebrated during the second full week of May to honor the sacrifices and contributions of citizens who uphold the right to trial by jury and to raise awareness about their vital role in the court system. The Orange County Superior Court proudly participates in this statewide celebration.

In recognition of this occasion, Judge Marc M. Kelly hosted a luncheon and ceremony in 2024 honoring former Orange County jurors who have served in his courtroom in recent

years, with particular appreciation for those who served during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approximately 70 former jurors attended the lunch and were able to hear remarks from three past jurors who shared their experiences and reflections on jury service.



Hon. Marc M. Kelly, 2024 Juror Appreciation Event

"THE VERY EXISTENCE OF JURIES AND JURY TRIALS PROVIDES ALL OF US ONE OF THE BASIC GUARANTEES OF ACCESS TO IMPARTIAL JUSTICE SPELLED OUT IN OUR CONSTITUTION, OUR RIGHT TO A TRIAL WHERE ONE CAN BE HEARD AND JUDGED BY THEIR PEERS. WE DEEPLY APPRECIATE THE SACRIFICES AND CONTRIBUTIONS JURORS MAKE TO OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM."

ORANGE COUNTY PRESIDING JUDGE MARIA D. HERNANDEZ

2025 JUROR APPRECIATION WEEK

In May 2025, jurors summoned to report to the Juror Assembly Room at the Orange County Superior Court were welcomed with a thoughtful display of hospitality, including pastries, light snacks, and coffee. In collaboration with the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), the Central Justice Center hosted a daily program designed to recognize and celebrate the vital role jurors play in upholding our democratic system.

Each morning, jurors were greeted with a special program featuring a video that highlighted the significance of jury service and the meaningful contributions jurors make to the justice system. The program also included guest speakers who shared personal reflections on their experiences serving as jurors, offering insight into the fulfillment and civic pride that accompany jury service.



**JUDGE MARC M. KELLY WELCOMING JURORS
DURING JUROR APPRECIATION WEEK**

As an additional gesture of appreciation, jurors received small gift bags containing assorted treats along with copies of the Pocket Constitution, reinforcing the importance of their service and its connection to the foundational principles of justice and democracy.



JUDICIAL MENTOR PROGRAM



The purpose of the Judicial Mentor Program is to formalize the recruitment and development of qualified and diverse judicial candidates in Orange County. Designed by judges in collaboration with the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, the program seeks to identify, encourage and provide mentors for all individuals considering a judicial career.

One of the chief goals is to communicate to all sectors of the legal community the uniform message of Governor Newsom's judicial criteria and commitment to appointing a capable bench reflective of California's rich diversity.

The Judicial Mentor Program was established as part of a statewide initiative led by the Judicial Branch in collaboration with the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom to promote greater transparency and accessibility in the judicial appointment process. In furtherance of this initiative, Judicial Appointments Secretary Luis Céspedes convened workshops throughout the state to provide insight on the application process and also participated in multiple workshops hosted by the Orange County Superior Court.

The Judicial Mentor Committee has formulated a formal panel of mentor judges who are available to eligible applicants seeking guidance in applying to the bench. The role of the mentor judges is not to select or recommend candidates, but rather to demystify the application and vetting process. Participation in the mentor program is not a guarantee of appointment.

56

Number of Mentees that have participated in the Judicial Mentor Program at the Orange County Superior Court

5

Number of Mentees that were appointed as Judges at the Orange County Superior Court

Participants are paired with a mentor judge for up to one year. During this time, the mentors will discuss the prospective applicant's career objectives, answer questions about the application and vetting process, and provide input as the candidate completes the application.

JUDICIAL EXTERN PROGRAM

The Orange County Superior Court offers a comprehensive Judicial Extern Program for law students seeking practical experience in various areas of law, including civil, criminal, probate, family, mental health, and juvenile matters. Externs work closely with judicial officers and engage in tasks such as drafting bench memoranda, conducting legal research, assisting with special projects, and observing judicial proceedings.

The program provides real-world exposure in courtrooms and chambers, helping externs develop key legal skills such as legal research and writing, professional communication, practical experience in negotiations and mediations, and an understanding of ethics and professionalism. This opportunity bridges the gap between academic learning and the demands of the legal profession, offering invaluable insights into the judicial system and fostering both personal and professional growth.



“Through the Orange County Superior Court Judicial Extern Program, bench officers mentor law students from law schools all over the United States.

During the Summer, the Court has over a dozen activities for the judicial externs, including presentations on the different case types, ethics, civility and professionalism, jury selection and voir dire, and legal research and writing. They observe the different court proceedings in Family, Civil, Probate, Juvenile, Criminal, Collaborative Courts, the United States District Court, and the California Court of Appeal.

I would like to share a comment made by a judicial extern: 'The events were incredible. I learned so much at each and every one, plus they were great networking opportunities. I enjoyed the chance to get to know different departments and learn about various opportunities and career options. The people were all incredible and giving with their time. Amazing experience.' Having been a judicial extern, myself, I know that what our Program provides is a hands-on, invaluable experience for our future attorneys and judges."

*-Hon. Deborah C. Servino
Orange County Superior Court*

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The inaugural Leadership Academy, held in March 2007 at the Central Justice Center, is an outreach program designed to strengthen the Court's relationship with the community. The Academy offers interactive sessions where members can discuss concerns, learn about Court issues, and discover available programs and services. Participants also network with other community representatives and legal professionals.

Community-based organizations nominate individuals to represent various groups, such as minorities, religious organizations, or constituents of elected officials. Over three days, participants engage in discussions on topics like self-help services, juvenile delinquency, family law, and mental health courts, with panels from legal professionals and Court staff, followed by Q&A sessions.



Hon. Julie A. Palafox, Program Chair and Leadership Academy Graduating Class

"One of the most remarkable aspects of the Leadership Academy is the active participation of judges and court staff in every session. Engaging with them directly and hearing their insights firsthand is an invaluable learning experience!"

Martin Plascencia, Leadership Academy 2023

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND EDUCATION TOGETHER PROGRAM (JJET)

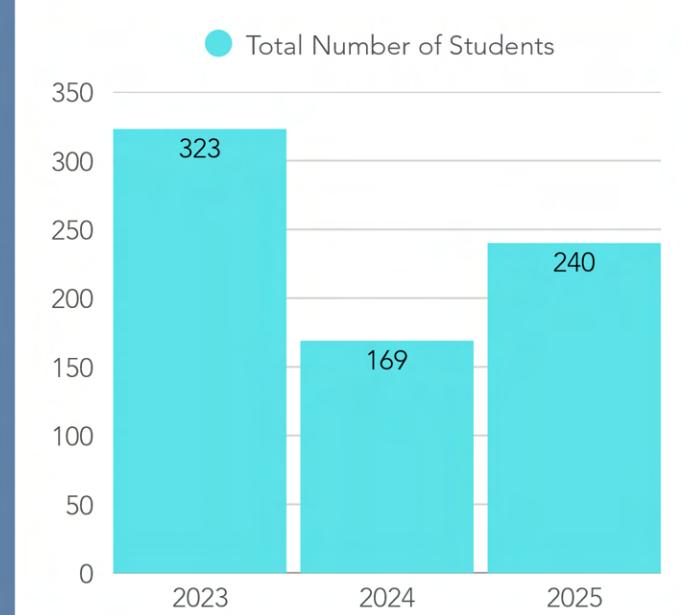
The Juvenile Justice Education Together (JJET) Program is a collaborative initiative between the Orange County Superior Court, the District Attorney's Office, and the Probation Department. This program aims to deter juvenile crime by providing educational opportunities to students in grades 5 through 8. The program takes place every Tuesday from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Lamoreaux Justice Center, where students are invited to experience the judicial process firsthand.

The JJET Program is designed to help young students understand the consequences of criminal behavior and the importance of making responsible decisions. By visiting the courthouse, they gain exposure to the workings of the justice system through interactive sessions with legal professionals, court staff, and probation officers. Students participate in engaging discussions about the legal system, the roles of various court personnel, and the importance of following the law.



732

TOTAL NUMBER OF
STUDENTS FROM
2023-2025 WHO
HAVE PARTICIPATED
IN JJET



Through this collaboration, the program provides a unique opportunity for students to interact with judges, attorneys, and other legal professionals, giving them a deeper understanding of the justice system while emphasizing the value of education in preventing delinquency. The goal is to inspire positive behavior, foster respect for the law, and promote community engagement, ultimately helping students make better choices and avoid future involvement with the justice system.

ORANGE COUNTY FAIR

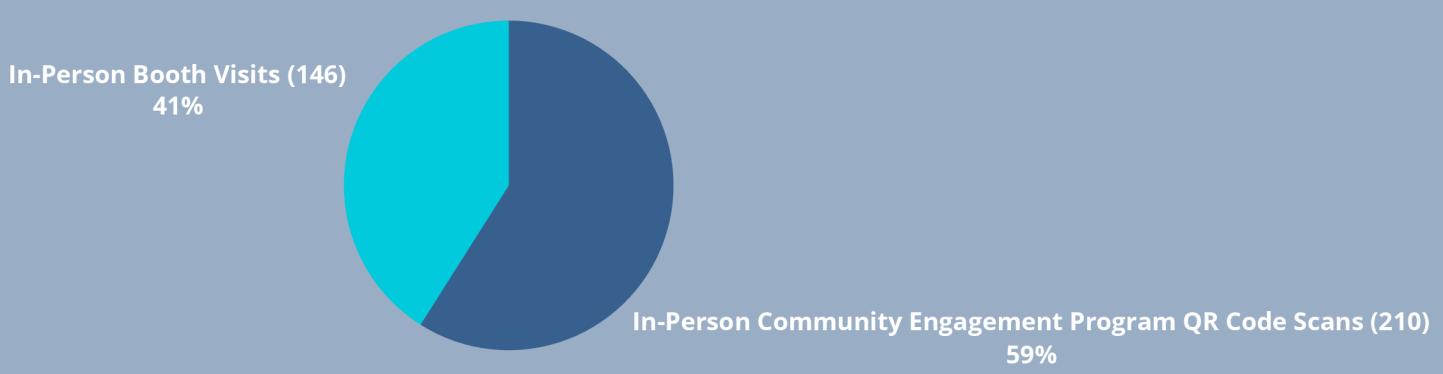
The Orange County Superior Court's participation in the 2024 Orange County Fair, held on July 19, 20, and 21, was a resounding success, connecting with over 2,500 fairgoers. This outreach initiative was a key component of the Court's Strategic Plan and reinforced its long-standing commitment to community engagement. By being present at the fair, the Court provided a platform for educating the public, answering questions, and fostering a deeper understanding of the judicial system.

The Court's participation served several critical purposes:

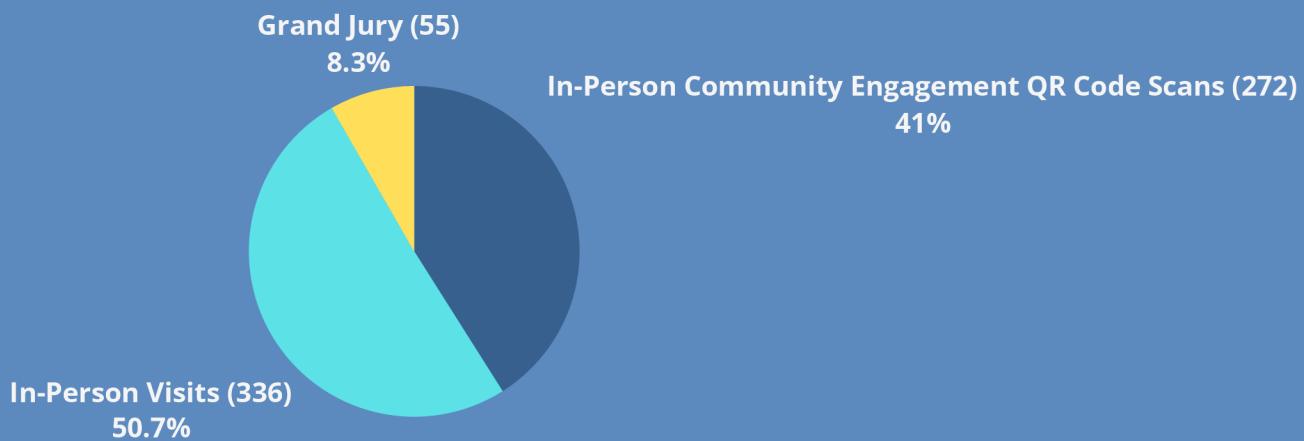
- **Community Outreach:** The fair allowed the Court to engage with diverse community members, promoting awareness of legal processes and answering questions to foster a more informed public.
- **Public Education:** The Court shared information about its services, including the Journey Through Justice Court Tour Program, Leadership Academy, Speakers' Bureau, Judicial Mentor Program helping the public understand its role in the justice system.
- **Building Trust and Transparency:** The Court's visibility fostered trust by making judicial officers and staff approachable, enhancing public confidence in the judicial process.
- **Promoting Youth Engagement:** The fair was an ideal venue to promote youth programs like the Read Across America Program, Judges in the Classroom, All Rise Student Mentor Program, encouraging young people to get involved in law and civic duties.
- **Promoting Volunteerism:** The Court highlighted opportunities for community involvement, such as becoming a Court Ambassador.
- **Encouraging Civic Engagement:** The Court emphasized the importance of civic duties, encouraging fairgoers to engage in their communities and understand their rights.
- **Humanizing the Judiciary:** By interacting directly with the public, the Court made the judicial system more relatable and approachable, showcasing the people behind the roles.



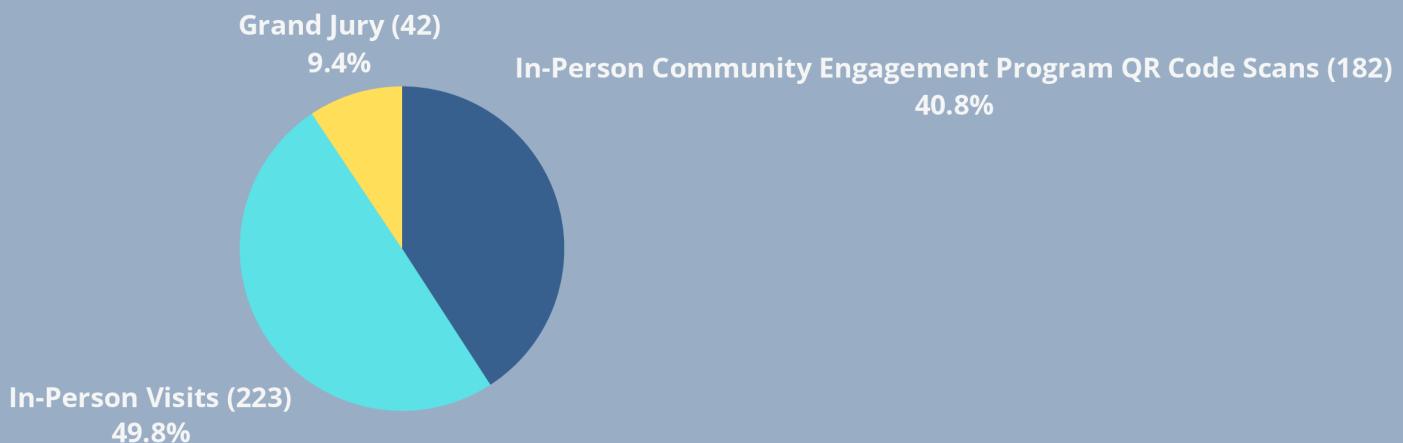
OC FAIR TABLING - FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2024

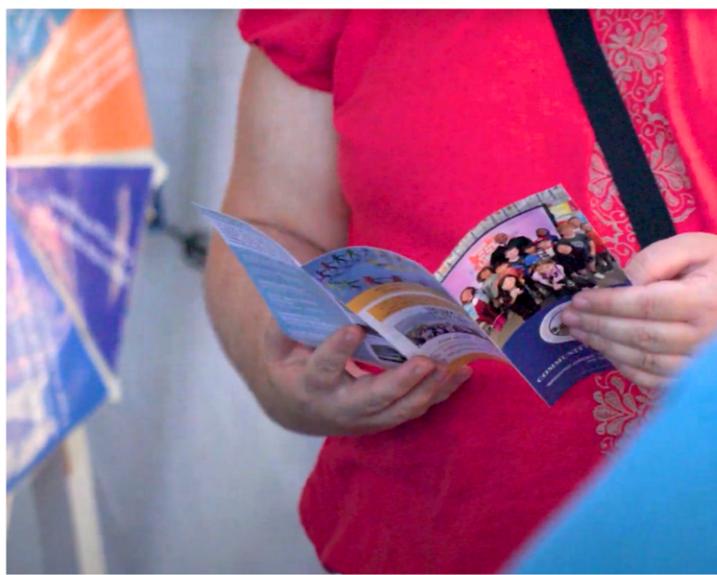


OC FAIR TABLING - SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2024



OC FAIR TABLING - SUNDAY, JULY 21, 2024





SPEAKERS' BUREAU



"Judge Clavecilla's speech was inspiring. His journey, from overcoming challenges to becoming a judge, reminded me that perseverance leads to great achievements. It motivated me to keep pushing forward and believe in my own resilience."

**Rio Hondo Community College Graduate,
Class of 2024**

The Speakers' Bureau offers community groups, colleges, and universities a unique opportunity for face-to-face discussions with judicial officers and court officials, enhancing public understanding of the judicial system.

This program provides a valuable forum for exchanging views and learning about the legal field. The range of topics, which our speakers are available to address, reflect the diversity of the Orange County Superior Court Judiciary such as mock trials, speeches, and discussions.

29,879

COMMUNITY MEMBERS
REACHED THROUGH THE
SPEAKERS' BUREAU
PROGRAM
EVENTS AND
PANELS.

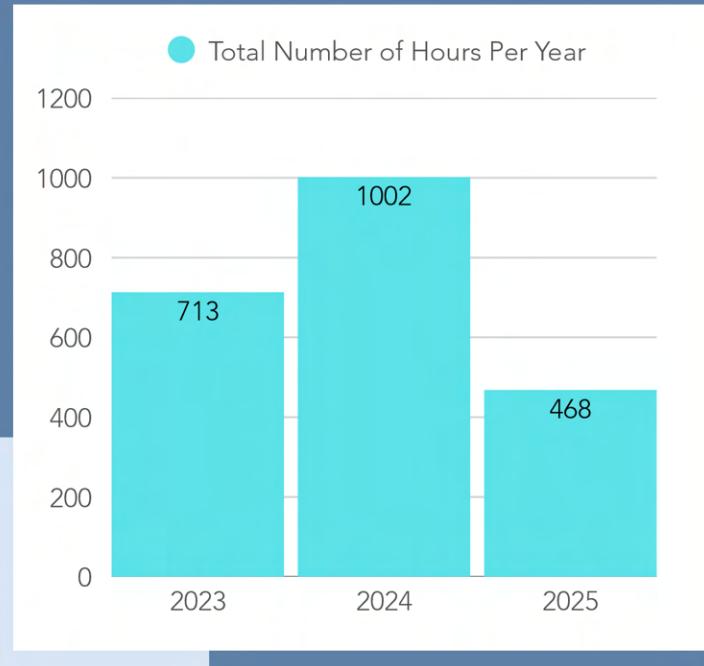


Presiding Judge Maria D.
Hernandez speaking to the
Armenian Law Student
Association at Chapman Law.



Judge Bryan F. Clavecilla
speaking to high school students
at a College and Career Fair
about how to become a judge.

SPEAKERS' BUREAU



2,183
HOURS
VOLUNTEERED
THROUGH SPEAKERS'
BUREAU EVENTS &
PRESENTATIONS



Assistant Presiding Judge Sheila F. Hanson speaking to students during Project SELF



Judge Olga Giller swearing in Student Leadership at Vibrant Minds Charter

ALL RISE STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM



The All Rise Student Mentor Program, launched in Summer 2024 at the Orange County Superior Court, provides high school and undergraduate students with a unique opportunity to explore the legal system, interact with judicial officers, and gain insights into potential legal careers. Initially starting with three schools, in 2025 the program has now expanded to all Orange County high schools.

This one-week program promotes trust and transparency in the justice system by offering students direct engagement with courtroom staff, including clerks, reporters, interpreters, and bailiffs. Participants will also meet with district attorneys, public defenders, and law enforcement personnel, and observe live court proceedings.

"I found it very interesting because I enjoy watching trials and learning from professionals immensely. It gives me an idea of what I will be doing one day."

-JSerra Student

"I found the question and answer sessions with the Panel Judicial Officers to be the most interesting! Every judge had lots of energy, and I like the diversity with the types of law they did. Very informative and fun!"

-Brea Olinda High Student

"Sessions with my mentor were very interesting and informative. He was able to give me advice on any topic and was very good at helping me create a plan for myself. Along with that, he gave me hope for the future. Thank you Judge Claustro."

-Santa Ana High Student

Additional activities include courthouse tours, mock trials, and panel discussions with legal professionals.

The All Rise Student Mentor Program aims to empower youth by providing mentorship from judicial officers, fostering academic achievement, and reducing recidivism through early court engagement. By strengthening community connections and promoting lifelong learning, the program seeks to inspire students to explore law-related careers and make informed life choices.

130

STUDENTS PAIRED
WITH JUDICIAL
OFFICERS AT
CENTRAL JUSTICE CENTER FOR THE ALL
RISE STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM

ALL RISE STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM PHOTOS



ALL RISERS POSE FOR A PICTURE WITH JUDGE BRYAN F. CLAVECILLA.



ALL RISERS RECEIVING A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION FROM JUDGE CARMEN D. SNUGGS-SPRAGGINS, JUDGE RANDY K. LADISKY AND JUDGE JUNE AN.

ALL RISERS VISITING THE RONALD REAGAN COURTHOUSE WITH JUDGE FRED SLAUGHTER.



JUDGE MENA T. GUIRGUIS VISITING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR READ ACROSS AMERICA.



JUDGE BRYAN F. CLAVECILLA READING, "GRACIE FOR PRESIDENT."

3,193

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS
WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE
READ ACROSS AMERICA
PROGRAM



JUDGE H. SHAINA COLOVER RECORDING A BOOK READING
FOR READ ACROSS AMERICA.

READ ACROSS AMERICA PROGRAM

BUILDING FUTURES, TOGETHER

The Read Across America Program is a year-round initiative designed to inspire a love of reading and promote literacy among young children. This nationwide program emphasizes the importance of books and stories as tools for self-discovery and understanding the diverse world around them.

The Orange County Superior Court is proud to support this program by offering judicial officers to read to Pre-K through 3rd grade students, either virtually or in person. By participating in the program, teachers can provide their students with an enriching experience that not only fosters a passion for reading but also introduces them to legal professionals who serve as positive role models.

Through this ongoing initiative, the Orange County Superior Court helps bring the magic of storytelling and the importance of education directly to local classrooms, creating a lasting impact on the students it reaches.



"I wanted to express my heartfelt gratitude for taking the time to visit our class and read a story
The Three Little Pigs to the students.

They were so blessed by it and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It was such a joy to have you share not only your story but also the important work you do as a judge. Your passion for your job shone through, and the students could clearly see how much you love serving in your role. In fact, one of the students even said, "I want to be a judge when I grow up!" Your visit left a lasting impact on their hearts.

Thank you again for blessing our class and making the day so special. We are grateful for your kindness and for showing our students the value of serving others through your work."

-Mrs. V., Heritage Christian Academy

YOUNG MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CIVIC LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



This past November 2025, we welcomed over 130 sophomores, juniors and seniors from Orange County to Central Justice Center in Santa Ana, CA for the Young Men's and Women's Civic Leadership Conference. Students attended this full-day conference interacting directly with local leaders and lawmakers regarding issues affecting their communities.

These young leaders were able to participate in engaging panels, interactive workshops, and discussions that highlighted leadership skills and civic responsibility.

132 STUDENTS ACROSS ORANGE COUNTY PARTICIPATED IN THE YOUNG MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CIVIC LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE IN 2025



SCHOOLS ACROSS ORANGE COUNTY ATTENDED THE YOUNG MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CIVIC LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

15

YOUNG MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CIVIC LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The program commenced with a Presentation of Colors by the Orange County Sheriff's Department, followed by welcome remarks delivered by Presiding Judge Maria D. Hernandez and comments from Jennifer Leeper of the American Board of Trial Advocates, who emphasized the importance of civic leadership and collaboration within the justice system.

Following the opening remarks, the keynote address by Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes, who offered perspectives on leadership, public service, and the importance of community partnership.

A highlight of the event was the Civic Engagement and Empowerment Panel and Workshop, which brought together prominent elected officials, including Congressman Lou Correa (46th Congressional District), Senator Tom Umberg (34th Senate District), and Assemblymember Avelino Valencia (68th Assembly District). Panelists discussed pathways to effective civic participation and strategies for empowering communities through public service.



**Orange County Sheriff
Don Barnes**



Following the panel, attendees participated in structured small-group discussions. Each group was facilitated by a judicial officer, court executive, or attorney, with the objective of developing actionable initiatives designed to foster positive and meaningful change within their respective communities.

After the luncheon recess, the program concluded with a panel, "Justice in Action: Shaping Leaders Through the Courts and Community." This session included a moderated question-and-answer segment, providing the student leaders with the opportunity to engage directly with panelists on topics related to leadership development, the justice system, and community involvement.

YOUNG MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CIVIC LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Special Highlights:

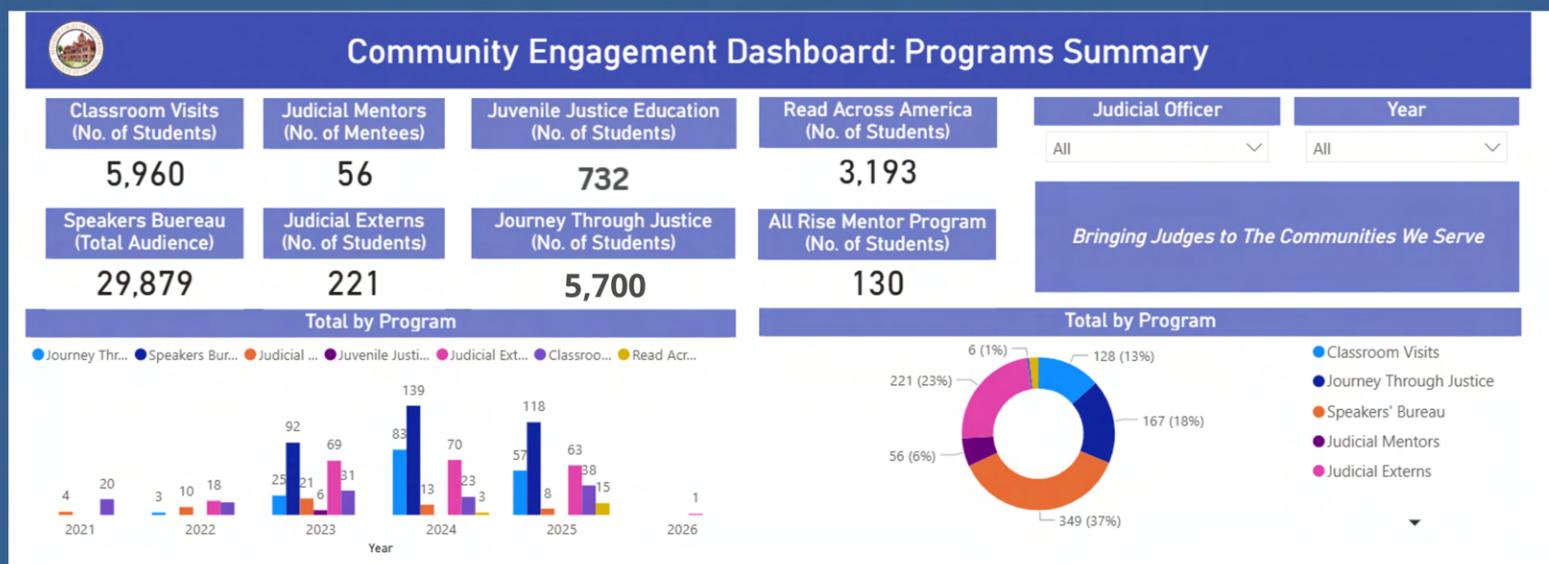
- **How to Influence Change:** Participants connected directly with local and state elected officials and learned effective strategies for shaping public policy, influencing decision-making, and making a meaningful impact within their communities.
- **Understanding the Three Branches of Government:** Attendees received an in-depth look at how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches worked together, gaining expert insight from Appellate Justices, Superior Court Judges, and leaders from the Public Defender's and District Attorney's Offices.
- **Pathways to Civic Engagement:** The program highlighted accessible opportunities for civic involvement and demonstrated how participants could begin making a difference in local government and community initiatives.
- **Effective Leadership:** Students developed essential leadership skills needed to lead impactful community projects, including organizing food drives, coordinating environmental cleanups, and implementing other service-oriented initiatives.



**Congressman Lou Correa,
Assistant Presiding Judge Sheila F. Hanson,
Presiding Judge Maria D. Hernandez,
Senator Tom Umberg,
and Assemblymember Avelino Valencia at the
Young Men's and Women's Civic Leadership Conference**

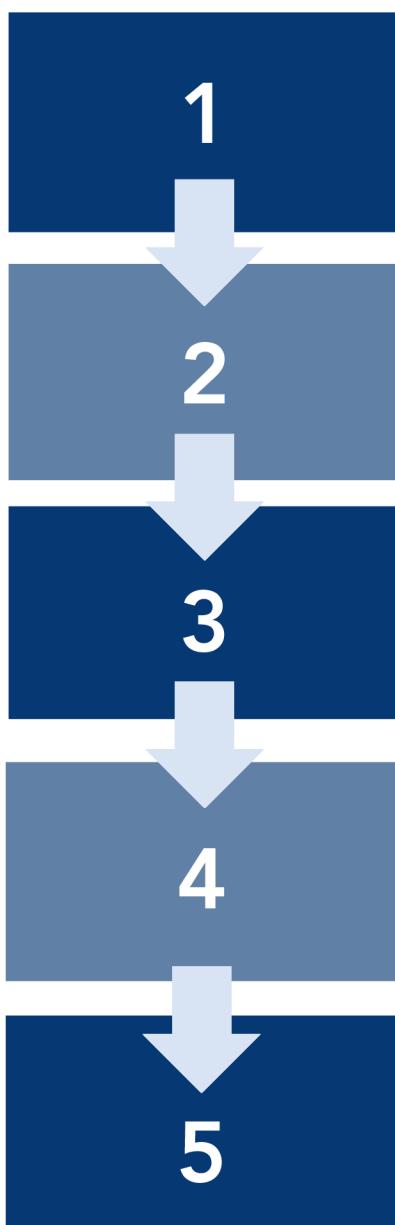
PROGRAM SUMMARIES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DASHBOARD



FUTURE GOALS

In the coming year, the Orange County Superior Court envisions a continued expansion of its outreach efforts through programs thoughtfully designed to serve and empower the community. By elevating civic education, deepening community partnerships, and creating meaningful and accessible pathways for engagement with the judicial system, the Court seeks to inspire greater public understanding and trust. Through these initiatives, the Court reaffirms its commitment to civic education, community involvement, and fostering an inclusive learning environment.



Secure Grant Funding

The Court will continue to seek grants and partnerships to enhance funding for programs like Jury Appreciation and Civic Leadership, ensuring accessibility and an expanded reach to underserved communities.

Expand the Journey Through Justice Court Tour Program

A future goal of the program is to expand lesson offerings to better serve the diverse age groups that visit our courts.

Grow the Judges in the Classroom (JIC) Program:

The JIC program aims to expand classroom visits by proactively engaging schools that have not previously requested a judge visits.

Year-Round Expansion of the Read Across America Program

The Court will continue expanding the Read Across America program, with judicial officers inspiring reading and promoting literacy year-round through classroom visits.

Civic Learning Award Support for Schools

The Court is committed to supporting Orange County schools in developing impactful civic education programs and guiding them through the application process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Orange County Superior Court Judicial Assistance Group would like to thank all those whose collaborative efforts have helped evolve and grow our programs, making this report possible. A special thanks to the Orange County Department of Education, the Judicial Council of California, Orange County Superior Court judicial officers, executive management, employees, justice partners, the Grand Jury Association, all bar associations, and especially to the participating teachers and students, who are the heart of our programs.

Through the initiatives outlined in this report, the Orange County Superior Court reaffirms its commitment to civic education, community engagement, and fostering an inclusive environment for learning and interaction with the judicial system.



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