
WilmerHale Tutoring Program Recognized by Maya Angelou Public Charter School

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On April 20, [Caroline Coates](#) and [Todd Willis](#) represented the firm at [Maya Angelou Public Charter School's](#) (MAPCS) Partners and Funders Appreciation Breakfast in Washington DC. The event celebrated community partners who support the school's focus on academic achievement, social and emotional support, and career and college preparation for area students.

Each fall and spring, members of the DC office from across practices and administrative groups spend one day a week tutoring MAPCS students. Though the format of the sessions has changed over the years, the goal has remained the same—to instill confidence in the students and help guide them in their career development.

“We used to focus on homework assistance, but have since adjusted our program to better meet the needs of the school,” says Coates who, along with Willis and [Matthew Celestin](#), coordinates the firm's participation. “This year, we've focused on enhancing the students' reading and comprehension skills through activities featuring SAT vocabulary and read-out-loud experiences. We've also led sessions focused on career development, including resume and personal statement workshops, and a mock client intake interview exercise.”

Many of the students at MAPCS have faced challenges with truancy, discipline and academics while at other schools, and many have also faced challenges in their home life, so Coates and Willis say consistency in the program is vital.

“MAPCS and the [See Forever Foundation](#), co-founded by WilmerHale alumnus David Domenici, were established to address the troubling number of students going through the criminal justice system,” explains Willis, who has served as a volunteer tutor for the past 10 years. “These are bright kids who just need a chance to succeed in school.”

The firm has supported MAPCS since the beginning, and the recent event was a chance to recognize that longstanding and effective relationship. At the event, remarks from Samantha Meyer, MAPCS faculty who assists with the firm's tutoring program, were shared: “I have spoken before

about how rare high-quality professional experience and exposure is for many of our students, and although they only spend an hour and a half each week at WilmerHale, the discussions and experiences fuel countless hours of conversation for the students, and will have a lasting effect on their perceptions of the world and themselves.”

Willis says the firm's investment in seeing the program succeed makes all the difference: “We have firm partners on the See Forever board, WilmerHale has made financial donations to the school, and we have lawyers and staff at all levels involved in tutoring.”

Coates agrees: “It's all about the volunteer commitment—their recurring participation each week is so significant for our students. Recently, several students were surprised to learn that we aren't paid to work with them each week, and that we are only there for them. It's incredible that there are people who devote their time so consistently to this program, even when it is not easy to do so.”



(From left: MAPCS student Destiny Bennett, Caroline Coates and Todd Willis.)