
Partnership with Community Organization Inspires Students and Attorneys

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For over 10 years, WilmerHale has partnered with [Citizen Schools](#) to support innovative after-school and extended-day learning in urban public school systems. This year, the firm's work with the national non-profit organization continues, bringing middle school students to WilmerHale for an "apprenticeship" in law, culminating in a mock trial. While the program is centered around the students, each semester is a learning experience for the participating attorneys as well, and marks a continuation of the firm's dedication to pro bono and community service.

WilmerHale follows a focused philanthropy model, concentrating its resources and time on a smaller group of organizations, with an eye toward long-term relationships and capacity building, rather than making smaller monetary donations to a wide variety of organizations. The model includes a renewable, multi-year financial commitment, pro bono legal representation, volunteer service and in-kind donations agreed upon by the firm and the participating organizations.

"We've had a pretty close relationship with Citizen Schools from the very beginning," says transactional counsel [Stacy Krause](#), who serves as a liaison to Citizen Schools and coordinates pro bono work on behalf of the

organization. “It’s a real partnership.”

Citizen Schools is a network of after-school education programs for middle school students that engages them in hands-on apprenticeship projects led by volunteers and professional educators. The organization recruits “citizen teachers” from businesses, civic institutions and communities to teach their own professional or life experiences to the students.

Beginning in February, students came to WilmerHale’s Boston and Palo Alto offices to participate in the 10-week apprenticeship program, working with associates, counsel and partners to prepare for their mock trial. Trials in Boston are held at the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse and trials for the Palo Alto program are held at the Redwood City Courthouse. Each trial takes place before a real judge, the participating attorneys and the students’ families.

“At the beginning, we conduct lessons on basic legal terms and on what happens at a trial,” explains transactional associate Drew Kervick. “We explain what a plaintiff is, what a defendant is, what a judge does, what a jury does, the steps of a trial, and the difference between criminal and civil cases. I’ve been impressed by how much the students often already know, and how quickly they pick up the new information that we present.”

A majority of students enrolled in Citizen School programs have faced adversity in school, at home or in their neighborhoods. Participating in Citizen Schools and visiting the firm each week achieves more than just keeping them off the street, it also fosters a positive view of themselves and the educational possibilities that lay ahead.

“The students are very appreciative,” says Kervick, who, along with other

participating attorneys, has received thank you notes from students enrolled in the program. Some students have even reported that the apprenticeship inspired them to pursue a profession in law.