



2025-2026

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION
Handbook**



Adapted from the California State Mock Trial Team
Rulebook Published by Teach Democracy
<https://teachdemocracy.org/>

Teams advancing to the California State Mock Trial Competition
should follow the rules and procedures outlined in the
California State Mock Trial Team Rulebook.

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IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

DATE	EVENT
August 18, 2025	Program Launch – Coordinator Packet Available
September 3, 2025	Intent to Participate Form Deadline
September 5, 2025	Case Brief Release
September 11, 2025	Case Release
November 10, 2025	Team Registration Materials Deadline
December 5, 2025	Team Practice @ Riverside Hall of Justice, Southwest Justice, & Larson Justice 6:00 p.m.
December 12, 2025	Team Practice @ Riverside Hall of Justice, Southwest Justice, & Larson Justice 6:00 p.m.
January 6, 2026	Updated Case Release
January 9, 2026	Team Practice @ Riverside Hall of Justice, Southwest Justice, & Larson Justice 6:00 p.m.
January 22, 2026	Round 1 @ Riverside Hall of Justice, Southwest Justice, & Larson Justice 6:00 p.m.
January 27, 2026	Round 2 @ Riverside Hall of Justice 6:00 p.m.
January 30, 2026	<u>CA School Registration</u> Deadline
February 3, 2026	Round 3 @ Riverside Hall of Justice 6:00 p.m.
February 7, 2026	Round 4 @ Riverside Hall of Justice 9:00 a.m.
	Awards Ceremony @ RCOE Conference Center 2:30 p.m.
February 10, 2026	Round 5 (Elite 8) @ Riverside Hall of Justice 6:00 p.m.
February 17, 2026	Round 6 (Semi-Finals) @ Riverside Historic Courthouse 6:00 p.m.
February 19, 2026	Round 7 (Finals) @ Riverside Historic Courthouse 6:00 p.m.
TBD	Team Registration Deadline (if advancing to state finals)
	Student Waiver/Release Deadline (if advancing to state finals)
	Student Registration Fees Due - \$95 per student (if advancing to state finals)
	Hotel Reservations Deadline (if advancing to state finals)
March 2026	CA Mock Trial Finals @ TBD
May 7-9, 2026	National Mock Trial @ Des Moines, Iowa

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Riverside County Mock Trial is sponsored by Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA), and Riverside County Superior Courts, in cooperation with Teach Democracy. The Mock Trial Steering Committee, made up of representatives of the legal and education community, are responsible for enforcing the rules and regulations of the competition. The chairperson of the Steering Committee is Melissa Moore, Managing Deputy District Attorney. The logistics of the event are handled through the Riverside County Office of Education, Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools.

Judges and scoring attorneys volunteer their time to assist with the Riverside County Mock Trial competition. The Riverside County Bar Association is a vital source in recruiting volunteers.

ATTORNEY COACHES

It is recommended that each school/team recruit an attorney coach to work with their team well in advance of the Mock Trial competition. The most successful teams involve attorney coaches at the earliest possible time. If a school is unable to recruit an attorney coach and has exhausted all resources, contact Yadira Chavelas, Administrator, Events, at ychavelas@rcoe.us. Attorney coaches needing assistance throughout the Mock Trial season should contact Melissa Moore, Steering Committee Chairperson, at mgmoore@rivcoda.org.

JUDICIAL MENTOR

If desired by the teacher and attorney coach, schools may recruit a judicial mentor. The role of the judicial mentor may include assisting teams by judging and critiquing practice rounds. The mentor may also provide other assistance as agreed upon by the coaching staff and the judicial mentor.

RULE 1.1 — RULES

- A. All trials will be governed by the rules of the Riverside County Mock Trial Program and the California Mock Trial Rules of Evidence.
- B. All participants in the Mock Trial competition must follow all rules and procedures as specified in the Mock Trial materials disseminated by the Riverside County Office of Education. Failure of any member or affiliate of a team to adhere to the rules may result in disqualification of that team.
- C. All teams entering the Riverside County Mock Trial Competition shall sign an agreement to follow the rules outlined in this document. The Riverside County Office of Education shall provide the agreement form, which must be signed and filed prior to participation in Mock Trial events.

RULE 1.2 — CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

All participants, including observers, are bound by all sections of this Code and agree to abide by the provisions.

- A. All competitors, coaches, and other participants, including observers, will show courtesy and respect for all team members and participants, including their opponents and all judges, attorney coaches, teacher coaches, mock trial staff, and volunteer personnel.
- B. All competitors, teacher coaches, attorney coaches, and participants, including observers, will show dignity and restraint, irrespective of the outcome of any trial. Trials, contests, and activities will be conducted honestly, fairly, and with civility.
- C. Team members and all student participants will conform to the highest standards of deportment. Team members and participants will not employ tactics they believe to be wrong or in violation of the Rules. Members and participants will not willfully violate the Rules of the competition in spirit or in practice. All teams and participants are responsible for ensuring that all observers are aware of the Code.
- D. Teacher coaches agree to focus on the educational value of the Mock Trial Competition. They shall discourage willful violations of the Rules and/or this Code. Teachers will instruct students as to proper procedure and decorum and will assist their students in understanding and abiding by the letter and the spirit of the competition's Rules and this Code of Ethical Conduct.
- E. Attorney coaches agree to uphold the highest standards of the legal profession and will zealously encourage fair play. Attorney coaches are reminded that they must serve as positive role models for the students. They will promote conduct and decorum among their team members and fellow coaches in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the competition's Rules and this Code of Ethical Conduct and will demonstrate the same through their own behavior. They will emphasize the educational value of the experience by requiring that all courtroom presentations (e.g., pretrial, questions, objections, etc.) be substantially the work product of the student team members.
- F. By participating in the program, students, teacher coaches, and attorney coaches are presumed to have read and agreed to the provisions of the Code. Violations of this Code of Ethical Conduct may be grounds for disqualification from the competition, and/or suspension or expulsion from the program.

RULE 1.3 — TRIAL PROCEDURES

- A. The mock trial is a bench trial. Attorneys and witnesses are not allowed to verbally address the scoring attorneys as if they are a jury.
- B. When the trial begins, the presider will ask the team members, teachers, and the attorney coaches to introduce themselves. Once the trial begins, other than the clerk and bailiff, team members must not communicate with the scoring attorneys until the conclusion of the trial.
- C. Teams will be identified by team code only and not by school name.
- D. All participants are required to wear appropriate courtroom attire. Wearing clothing or displaying items that identify their school is prohibited.
- E. Teams are required to submit team rosters to the scoring attorneys prior to the start of the round. Rosters will be used in rounds 1, 2, 3, and 4 for the purpose of blue ribbon nominations. Presiding judges do not provide blue ribbon nominations.
- F. All team members participating in a trial must be in the courtroom at the scheduled time, ready to begin the round. Incomplete teams must begin the trial without their other members or with alternates.
- G. If a scheduled team is not present within 30 minutes after the scheduled trial time, that team forfeits the trial and is subject to possible disqualification subject to the discretion of the Mock Trial Steering Committee. In the event of a forfeiture, the declared winner shall be awarded 52 percentage points and the forfeiting team 48 percentage points.
- H. Recesses will not be allowed for any reason (unless authorized by Mock Trial staff or presiders). If, during a round, the presiding judge allows an interruption in the trial for any reason, team members, teacher coaches, and attorney coaches shall remain in the courtroom and shall not confer or otherwise communicate among themselves.
- I. Other than the exhibits provided in the trial material, no other illustrative aids of any kind may be used.
- J. Props, costumes, theatrical makeup, and character-specific clothing accessories are prohibited. In keeping with the educational philosophy and objectives of the Mock Trial Program, teams should concentrate on presenting the trial in a realistic manner, with witnesses wearing appropriate courtroom attire and using their normal speaking voices. Portrayals of racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes are inappropriate and are not allowed.
- K. Gender-neutral names allow for students of either gender to play the role of any witness. During trial, questions regarding gender, race, or physical characteristics not included in the official case materials are not allowed.
- L. The prosecution will provide the clerk, and the defense will provide the bailiff for each round. The clerk and bailiff will also act as the liaison between the team and competition coordinators during the competition.
- M. Teacher coaches, attorney coaches and spectators may leave the courtroom during the trial only when necessary as to not disrupt the trial. No teacher coach, attorney coach, or spectator may contact a team member while outside the courtroom, nor shall a team member confer or otherwise communicate among themselves. Student attorneys may not leave the courtroom during the trial except in an emergency at the direction of the presiding judge.

RULE 1.4 – COPYRIGHT AND PLAGIARISM

- A. The California Mock Trial materials are protected by copyright and may not be re-printed anywhere, including on the Internet, without express permission from Teach Democracy. Any violation of this rule may result in litigation and in disqualification of a team. However, Teach Democracy grants all recipients a license to reproduce the lesson included in the beginning of the case material and the exhibits for distribution to students and educators.
- B. Any alteration or viewing of confidential California Mock Trial materials posted on the Teach Democracy web site will result in the immediate school disqualification and potential litigation by Teach Democracy.
- C. Plagiarism* of any kind is unacceptable. Students' written and oral work must be their own. (*Webster's Dictionary defines plagiarism as, "to steal the words, ideas, etc. of another and use them as one's own.")
- D. Trials are open to the public, but no intentional scouting is allowed (see Code of Ethical Conduct). Students, teacher coaches, attorney coaches, and other team representatives may not observe other Riverside County team competition rounds during the Riverside County competition unless they have already been eliminated from the competition (example: a team that does not advance to the Elite 8, Semi-Final, or Final round may observe those rounds of competition).

RULE 2.1 — TEAM ELIGIBILITY

- A. The Riverside County Mock Trial Competition is open to all public, private, and charter schools in Riverside County, for students in grades 9 through 12.
- B. A home-schooled student may participate if the district allows home-schooled students to participate in extracurricular activities. Home-schooled students participate through the public high school they would attend if they were not home schooled, with the approval of the school.
- C. All teacher coaches or school representatives must be identified for each team. The teacher coach will be the contact for all communication for the competition.
- D. All teams must register with the Riverside County Office of Education by the designated registration deadline date and pay required registration fees.
- E. In addition to registering with their county coordinator, all teams and team members must register with Teach Democracy, teachdemocracy.org, by the date requested.
- F. All team members must be eligible under school district and state rules applicable to involvement in extracurricular activities.
- G. All team members must be registered at the school for which they are competing. Any exceptions to this rule are handled on a case-by-case basis, with final decision on participation provided by Riverside County Office of Education and Teach Democracy.
- H. After the county registration deadline, no new team members may be added. After completion of the county competition, no new team members may be added to a team attending the State competition.
- I. The teacher coach or school representative has an affirmative duty to verify each team member's eligibility. Submission of the registration materials with Riverside County Office of Education, and online student registration with Teach Democracy, constitutes certification that the status of each participant has been verified. The teacher coach or school representative must be identified and be present for each team during competition.
- J. Schools are only allowed to field one team, unless they are fielding a selected wild card team as outlined in this rulebook under the Wild Card team section.
- K. Teacher coaches are in charge of organizing the seating in each courtroom. The courtroom will be divided in half, and each team will be assigned one side. Unoccupied seats on the opposite side may be utilized.
- L. Only official attorney scorers, the courtroom artist, courtroom journalist, and one video camera operator per team (during final round), with permission by both teams, may sit in the jury box. Non-coaching observers may sit in the jury box with the court's permission only if there are no other seats available in the courtroom.

RULE 2.2 — TEAM COMPOSITION

- A. A team may have between 8 and 25 team members, including alternates and supporting roles. The official team roster must be composed of registered team members only.
- B. Teams are encouraged to use the maximum number of students allowable.
- C. Teams are encouraged to use the maximum number of student attorneys when possible.
 - A maximum of two (2) Pretrial Motion Attorneys—one pretrial attorney for the defense and one pretrial attorney for the prosecution. Pretrial attorneys may

not serve as trial attorneys during the same round but may serve as a witness.

- A maximum of three (3) Trial Attorneys for Prosecution and a maximum of three (3) Trial Attorneys for Defense. It is highly recommended that different trial attorneys conduct the opening statement and the closing argument and that each trial attorney conduct at least one direct examination and one cross-examination.
- D. Each team participating will be responsible for presenting both the prosecution and the defense side of the case.

RULE 2.3 — TEAM WITHDRAWAL

Any team that withdraws from a local or state competition will receive a partial monetary refund only if the county coordinator is notified in writing by a date established by the coordinator, and if no date is specified, two weeks before the day of the first round of competition.

- If a team withdraws from the Riverside County competition through December 31, 2025, 50% of the registration fee will be refunded. After January 1, 2026, only 25% of the fee will be refunded.

RULE 2.4 — WILD CARD TEAMS

- In the case there are an uneven number of teams entering the competition, schools may volunteer to field a second team as a wild card team. From the schools that volunteer, a drawing will be held to select the team that will compete at the county level as the wild card team.
- The wild card team competes throughout the entire competition.
- The registration fee for the wild card team is waived.
- The wild card team must be a completely separate team

and students may not be moved from the regular team to the wild card team or vice versa once the competition begins.

- In the event a regular team drops before the competition begins, the wild card team will not be eligible to participate.
- Teams from the same school will not compete against each other in the first four rounds of competition, but can face each other in the Elite 8, Semi-Final, or Final round(s) if both teams advance.

RULE 2.5 — AWARDS

- During rounds 1, 2, 3, and 4, each team will identify an MVP (“Most Valuable Player”) from the opposing team at the end of the round. Nomination for this award should be from the student team members rather than adult teacher or attorney coaches. Following the competition portion of the round, teams should announce to the opposing team the MVP for that round. Coaches should give the provided MVP certificate for the named MVP of their own team for that round.
- At the Riverside County competition, blue-ribbon awards are presented to students whose presentations during the competition are noteworthy and merit special recognition. Attorney scorers make nominations during rounds 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the competition. These nominations will be made based on the roster provided to the scoring attorneys at the beginning of each round. The roster should show the student assigned to each role. Blue-ribbon awards will be given as follows:
 - Prosecution Pretrial Attorney
 - Defense Pretrial Attorney
 - Prosecution Attorney
 - Defense Attorney
 - Prosecution Witness (4 witness roles)
 - Defense Witness (4 witness roles)
 - Clerk
 - Bailiff
- At the Riverside County competition, the top 3 courtroom artists and courtroom journalists will be recognized.
- Pins are presented to all students who receive a blue-ribbon nomination in rounds 1, 2, 3, or 4.
- Trophies are presented to the top four placing teams following the final round of competition. Individual medals will also be presented to each member of the county’s first, second, and third place teams. There will be two third place teams rather than a third and fourth place team.
- The Riverside County Office of Education will pay the registration fee for the winning team to compete at the California State Mock Trial Competition and will provide a stipend of \$1,000 to the winning team’s district to support the team’s expenses for participation at the state competition.
- The winning team will be responsible for expenses beyond the \$1,000 stipend and are responsible for coordinating their travel arrangements and completing the state registration process for the California State Mock Trial competition.

RULE 3.1 — THE CASE

- A. Case materials, prepared and provided by Teach Democracy, are shared with participating teams after they are released by Teach Democracy. Case materials are accessed electronically by teams that have submitted the Intent to Participate form. The materials are the same for all schools competing in Mock Trial programs throughout the state. Case materials contain the sources for the Mock Trial Program. These sources include the facts, witness statements, all the pretrial materials, charges, exhibits, rules of evidence, stipulations, role descriptions, Mock Trial procedures, and California Mock Trial Simplified Rules of Evidence.
- B. The fact situation is a set of indisputable facts.
- C. Stipulations may not be disputed at trial.
- D. Stipulations will be considered part of the record and already admitted into evidence.
- E. Stipulations and charges will not be read into the record.

RULE 3.2 — PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

- A. The prosecution team must bring to each trial the physical evidence listed under the heading “Physical Evidence” in the case materials. All reproductions can be as small as the original size of the exhibits found in the case material, but no larger than 22x28 inches. Teams will not be penalized if they choose not to reproduce and enlarge the exhibit as found in the case material. If the prosecution team fails to bring the physical evidence to court, it may be reflected in scoring. This copy will be maintained by the Bailiff who will display the evidence when requested by either side.
- B. No other physical evidence will be allowed. All physical evidence and witnesses found in this case, but not made physically available for trial, are unavailable and their availability may not be questioned.
- C. Procedures for introducing items into evidence – Attorneys may introduce physical exhibits, if any are listed under the heading “Evidence,” provided that the objects correspond to the description given in the case materials. Below are the steps to follow when introducing physical evidence (maps, diagrams, etc.).
 1. The bailiff will show the exhibits to both sides prior to the trial and they will be pre-marked for identification as People’s #__ or Defense #__
 2. When a witness is on the stand, either attorney may ask the bailiff to display an exhibit. The witness will then authenticate the exhibit by saying if he/she recognizes the item.
 3. After authentication, the witness may be questioned about the contents of the exhibit.
- D. Moving the item into evidence – Exhibits must be introduced into evidence if attorneys wish the court to consider the items themselves as evidence, not just the testimony about the exhibits. Attorneys must ask to move the item into evidence during the witness examination or before they finish presenting their case.
 1. “Your honor, I ask that this item (describe) be moved into evidence as People’s (or Defendant’s) Exhibit #__ and request that the court so admit it.”
 2. At this point, opposing counsel may make any proper objections.
 3. The judge will then rule on whether the item may be admitted into evidence.
- E. Whether a team introduces, uses, and moves the physical evidence into evidence is entirely optional, but all physical evidence must be available at trial for either side to use.
- F. Evidence should not be altered in any way. Marking on the exhibits is not permitted. Any alterations to the exhibits may be grounds for disqualification from the competition.
- G. The official diagrams establish only relative positions. Because the scale (if any) is approximate, the diagrams cannot be used to definitively establish distances. The issue of distances should be based on the witnesses’ testimony and is a matter of fact for presiders.
- H. Illustrative aids of any kind are prohibited, including but not limited to the use of electronic or light projected aids.

RULE 3.3 — TRIAL COMMUNICATION

- A. Once the trial has begun, attorney coaches, teacher coaches, team members, and spectators are not allowed to communicate with the teams, except as is described in the “30-second rule.” (See Rule 3.6(H)) This includes, but is not limited to, the utilization of text messages, chat messages, emails, hand signals, and notes.
- B. Communication between trial attorneys is allowed during the trial but must be non-disruptive.
- C. The defendant may communicate with the defense attorneys. All communication must be non-disruptive to the trial.
- D. After the pretrial, the pretrial attorneys may not communicate with the trial attorneys at any time.
- E. Once the trial has begun, there must be no spectator contact with student team members.

RULE 3.4 — WITNESSES

- A. Although witnesses are excluded from the trial proceedings in actual trials, for educational purposes, witnesses in the Mock Trial program will remain in the courtroom for the entire trial.
- B. Witnesses may not testify or respond to another witness’ testimony, unless otherwise stated in the stipulations.
- C. The fact situation, witness statements, stipulations, and exhibits are the official case materials and make up the sole source of information for testimony.
- D. Unless otherwise stated, attorneys may not solicit information from a witness that requires the witness to testify to information from another witness’ statement or information not included in their own statement.
- E. The witness statements contained in the case material should be viewed as signed statements made to the police by the witnesses. Unless otherwise specified, a witness can be impeached if she/he/them contradicts the case material contained in her/his/their witness statement or fact situation using the procedures as outlined in the case material.
- F. Because this is a mock trial, witnesses may not be treated as hostile witnesses.
- G. All witnesses must be called in the allotted time. If the direct-examination attorney runs out of time without calling one or more witnesses, the direct-examination attorney and the witness will each automatically receive a score of one (lowest possible score) for each witness not called, and the cross-examination attorney will automatically be awarded ten points for each witness not called. Once the time allotted for witnesses has ended, direct examination attorneys may not call any other witnesses.
- H. Cross-examination is required for all witnesses. If the cross-examination attorney does not cross one or more witnesses, the cross-examination attorney will receive a cross-examination score of one (lowest possible score) for the witnesses.
- I. Witnesses are not allowed to use notes while testifying during trial.

RULE 3.5 — UNFAIR EXTRAPOLATION

- A. It is each student's responsibility to work closely within the record.
- B. An unfair extrapolation occurs when a witness creates a material fact not included in his or her official record. A material fact is one that would likely impact the outcome of the case.
- C. Witnesses may, however, make fair extrapolations from the materials. A fair extrapolation is one in which a witness makes a reasonable inference based on his or her official record. A fair extrapolation does not alter the material facts of the case.
- D. Unfair extrapolations are best attacked through impeachment and closing arguments. They should be dealt with by attorneys during the course of the trial. (See Impeachment during Cross-Examination in the case packet.)
- E. If a witness is asked for information not contained in the witness's statement, the answer must be consistent with the statement and may not materially affect the witness's testimony or any substantive issue of the case.
- F. Attorneys shall not ask questions calling for information outside the scope of the case materials or requesting an unfair extrapolation.
- G. Attorneys for the opposing team may refer to this rule as a special "unfair extrapolation" objection.
- H. When an unfair extrapolation objection is made, possible rulings by a presider may be one of the following:
 1. No extrapolation has occurred. Objection overruled.
 2. An unfair extrapolation has occurred. Objection sustained.
 3. The extrapolation was fair. Objection overruled.
- I. The decision of the presiding judge regarding extrapolations or evidentiary matters is final. Scoring attorneys must take the presiding judge ruling on unfair extrapolations into consideration when determining the students' individual scores.
- J. Witnesses and attorneys making unfair extrapolations and attorneys who ask questions that require the witness to answer with an unfair extrapolation may be penalized by having points deducted from their individual scores.

RULE 3.6 - ATTORNEYS

- A. The prosecution presents the opening statement and closing argument first.
- B. Attorneys may conduct a re-direct examination when appropriate. No re-cross examination is allowed. Witnesses may not be recalled to the stand.
- C. The attorney who conducts the direct examination of a witness is the only person allowed to make objections to the cross-examination of that witness. The attorney who conducts the cross-examination of a witness is the only person allowed to make objections during the direct examination of the witness. Points may be deducted for each objection made by the wrong attorney.
- D. Attorneys may use notes while presenting their cases.
- E. The Mock Trial competition proceedings are governed by the California Mock Trial Simplified Rules of Evidence in the case material. Only specified types of objections will be recognized in the competition. Other rules may not be used at the trial.
- F. Legal motions not outlined in the official materials will not be allowed.
- G. There are no objections allowed during opening statements or closing arguments. (It will be the presider's responsibility to handle any legally inappropriate statements made in the closing, while scorers will also keep in mind the closing argument criteria). Points may be deducted for each objection made by the wrong attorney.
- H. There will be 30 seconds provided at the end of the pretrial and at the end of the trial for team members from each team to confer with the team's teacher coach and attorney coach to discuss any trial irregularities.
- I. If there are any irregularities regarding the rules of the competition which a team would like the presider and scorers to be aware of, one member will have 30 seconds to orally note the irregularities to the court. Coaches may not directly make arguments on behalf of the team.
- J. Teams arguing a violation of the rules must be able to point to specific incident(s) of the misconduct and be able to cite to the presider the corresponding violation in the team rulebook and/or case material.
- K. The presider will hear the alleged violation and rule on the violation. The presider's decision will be final.
- L. If the presider determines a violation exists, the presider will direct the scoring attorneys to take the violation into consideration. The scoring attorneys will use their discretion to determine individually how many points (if any) will be taken off their score sheet.
- M. The 30-second rule should be used for substantial rule violations and should not be used to argue additional points of law or to rebut an opponent's closing argument. Regarding questions of rule violations, the presider's decision will be final.
- N. It is solely the student attorneys' responsibility to bring up a rule infraction matter to the presiding judge's attention, including any mistakes and/or omissions made by the judge.

RULE 3.7 – CONDUCT OF THE PRETRIAL MOTION

- A. The defense will argue the pretrial motion first.
- B. Each attorney arguing a pretrial motion has four minutes to present a statement and two minutes for rebuttal. During these proceedings, pretrial attorneys must be prepared to answer questions from the presider to clarify their position.
- C. No objections are allowed during pretrial arguments.
- D. In order to present a position in the most persuasive manner, attorneys should carefully review and become familiar with the materials provided in the Mock Trial case materials.
- E. Additional background research may supplement their understanding of the issues at hand, but such supplemental materials may not be cited in arguments.
- F. No written pretrial motion memoranda may be submitted at trial.
- G. The pretrial motion, motions entering exhibits into evidence, and motion to strike testimony are the only motions allowed. All other motions are prohibited.

RULE 3.8 — CLERK, BAILIFF, AND UNOFFICIAL TIMER

A. The Mock Trial competition involves timed presentations. The clerk is the official neutral timekeeper for the trial. The clerk must keep accurate time for both teams, provide time remaining warnings, and complete a timesheet.

B. Modifications of time intervals are not permitted.

C. Running of another team's time is not allowed. One team's unreasonable running of the opposing team's time is inappropriate. The scorers should deduct points from the offending witness' score, should they determine that a witness is trying to run the opposing team's time. In addition, the presider may admonish the witness.

D. Each team will have 40 minutes to present its case, including the pretrial motion. The maximum allowable totals for each section must be observed. Time limits for each section are as follows:

- Pretrial Motion (4 minutes) and Rebuttal (2 minutes)
- Opening Statement/Closing Argument (9 minutes) and Rebuttal (1 minute)
- Direct/Re-direct Examination (14 minutes)
- Cross-Examination (10 minutes)

E. The time will start when each attorney starts to speak (i.e., first word of pretrial, opening, direct, cross-examination, and closing). Examples include but are not limited to:

- "May it please the court..."
- "Your Honor..."
- "Please state your name for the court..."

F. The time will be stopped when:

- Witnesses are called to the stand.
- Attorneys make objections.
- Presider questions attorneys and witnesses.
- Presider offers their ruling on objections.
- The bailiff is helping to display an exhibit.

G. Time will not be rounded off and must be measured to the whole second.

H. One minute is automatically reserved for rebuttal at the conclusion of closing argument. Only issues that were addressed in an opponent's closing argument may be raised during rebuttal. Formal reservation of rebuttal

time is not required. The clerk will stop students (both visually and verbally) at the end of the allotted time for each section. Thus, there will be no allowance for overtime.

I. During the county competition, verbal warnings of two-minute, one-minute, and 30 second must be given before the end of each section. The clerk will stop students (both visually and verbally) at the end of the allotted time for each section. There will be no allowance for overtime.

J. Any member of the team presenting defense may serve as an unofficial timer. The unofficial timer must be identified before the trial begins. To avoid timing issues, both the clerk and unofficial timers must sit next to each other during the trial. If timing variations occur of 15 seconds or more at the completion of any task during the trial, the timers will notify the judge immediately that a time discrepancy has occurred. Objections to the accuracy of the time at each point in the trial can only be made at that time. If an objection is made, both the clerk and the unofficial timer will confer to determine whether an error has been made. If an error has been made, it will be corrected at that time. If the clerk concludes that the time as indicated is correct, the presiding judge shall determine whether to accept the clerk's time or make a time adjustment. Any time discrepancies less than 15 seconds are not considered a violation. No time discrepancies will be entertained after the trial concludes. There will be no specific point deduction for irregularities in timing, although the scoring attorneys may take this into account in scoring the performance of the clerk.

K. The bailiff will call the court to order and swear in the witnesses. The bailiff will swear in the witnesses by using the following language: "Do you solemnly affirm that the testimony you are about to give will faithfully and truthfully conform to the facts and rules of the Mock Trial competition?"

L. The bailiff will call the court to order using the following language:
"All rise, Superior Court of the State of California,
County of Riverside, Department ___, is now in session.
Judge _____ presiding. (Allow time for the presider to take the bench). Please be seated and come to order."

RULE 3.9 – COURTROOM ARTIST

- A. All artists must be affiliated with a registered Riverside County Mock Trial team and enrolled at the team's school.
- B. All artists must be on the team's registered list. The student waiver & release form authorizes the publication or reprinting of the Courtroom Artist Contest submissions for educational purposes. No financial compensation will be awarded.
- C. The sketch must depict an actual courtroom scene observed by the courtroom artist. It is permissible to create details of a courtroom. Artists are reminded not to focus too much on the background.
- D. Sketch must be created and completed by the courtroom artist during the course of the artist's team round 2 without the help of any source or person. Artist may not submit your R1 "practice" sketch for judging.
- E. Sketches are evaluated and scored anonymously by a judge or judging team. The highest scored sketch will advance to the State competition.
- F. Judging is based on the courtroom artist judge's standards using the following criteria: Telling the story, composition, color/contrast, and authenticity
- G. The art submission must be done in color.
- H. The drawing must be on paper of the dimensions 11" X 14", with a horizontal format.

- I. The drawing may be done in any of the following mediums: Color pencil, pen and ink, pastel, marker. No watercolors or paint are allowed.
- J. Artist must follow the naming protocol Trial # - Team Code (P/D) First and Last Name - Artist
- K. No name/signature in the front of the submission is allowed.
- L. All artists should introduce themselves to the presider during their team' introductions – with their name, team code, and identify themselves as the courtroom artist.
- M. Once the trial has started, artists may not have any contact with anyone from their school (parents, teachers, or fellow students). The artist must create their drawing completely independently.
- N. At the end of Round 2, the artist must submit the sketch within 15 minutes of the conclusion of the trial to the Riverside County Office of Education representative.
- O. The art submission file must be labeled with the team code and student name only. No name/signature in the front of the submission is allowed.
- P. The courtroom artist is an official team member but is not counted toward the team's student limit. Teams can have up to two courtroom artists.

RULE 3.10 – COURTROOM JOURNALIST

- A. All journalists must be affiliated with a registered Riverside County Mock Trial team and enrolled at the team's school.
- B. All journalists must be on the team's registered list. The student waiver & release form authorizes the publication or reprinting of the Courtroom Journalism Contest submissions for educational purposes. No financial compensation will be awarded.
- C. Contestants may only watch and report on their own team's trials.
- D. All contestants are invited to watch their team's first trial as a practice. But, all contestants must write their articles based on their team's Round 2 trial.
- E. Typed submissions must be a 12 point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins, double-spaced, and article must not exceed 850 words.

- F. Submitted articles should be in the voice of a reporter covering a criminal trial. Use of dictionaries and thesauruses will be permitted.
- G. All contestants will have until 12:00 p.m. the day after their official round to complete and submit their articles to the designated email.
- H. All journalists should introduce themselves to the presider during their team' introductions – with their name, team code, and identify themselves as the courtroom journalist.
- I. Once the trial has started, journalists may not have any contact with anyone from their school (parents, teachers, or fellow students). The journalist must create their article independently.
- J. The courtroom journalist is an official team member but is not counted toward the team's student limit. Teams can have up to two courtroom journalists.

RULE 4.1 — RULE INTERPRETATION

- A. The presider is the ultimate authority throughout the trial. If there is a rule infraction, it is solely the student attorneys' responsibility to bring the matter to the presider's attention before a verdict is rendered.
- B. No bench conferences are allowed.
- C. The presider will determine if a rule was, in fact, violated. The presider's word is final.
- D. Each scorer will determine the appropriate amount of deduction individually.
- E. These rules are designed to introduce the procedures of law to participants and to foster good sportsmanship. Interpretations of the rules should be guided by common sense.
- F. Arguing for hypertechnical interpretations of the rules, especially when designed to embarrass others or to gain an unfair advantage, is prohibited and points may be deducted.

JUDGING AND TEAM ADVANCEMENT

RULE 5.1 — FINALITY OF DECISIONS

All decisions of the presider and scoring attorneys are final. No exceptions.

RULE 5.2 — JUDGING PANEL

- A. The judging panel will typically consist of 2 to 5 scoring attorneys. The Elite 8, Semi-Final, and Final rounds of the county competition will have five scorers.
- B. Attorney coaches cannot serve as scoring attorneys or presiders if their team is still active in the competition. Attorney coaches must be identified in the school roster.
- C. In order to give more attention to presentations, arguments, and objections, the presiding judge will not score, but will cast a ballot selecting which team they believe won the round. This ballot will only be used in the event of a tie. The presiding judge will rule on the pretrial motion, preside over the trial, decide questions of rule violations, and deliver the guilty or not guilty verdict.

RULE 5.3 — EVALUATION

- A. Each scoring attorney will use the evaluation and scoring criteria to assign a numerical value (1-10) to individual team presentations. Closing and pretrial arguments are weighted two times more than other categories.
- B. At the end of each round, the presiding judge will announce the verdict.

JUDGING AND TEAM ADVANCEMENT

RULE 5.4 — SCORING

- A. Students are to be rated on the 10-point scale for each category according to the criteria appropriate to each presentation. The lowest possible score that can be given is a 1 (one).
- B. Scoring attorneys should consider a “5” as a starting point and move up or down based on the presentation.
- C. Scoring attorneys must award points individually and not with consultation from other scoring attorneys.
- D. Some scores are weighted and therefore can affect a team’s score more dramatically. These include the pretrial motion (x2) and the closing arguments (x2).
- E. The scoring attorneys are scoring the individual presentation in each category.
- F. The scoring attorneys are not evaluating the legal merits of the case.

RULE 5.5 — RANKINGS AND TIES

- A. Round one assignments will be random. Scores for Round 1 will be used in aggregate scores. Round 2, 3, and 4 assignments will be based on a power matching system.
- B. In Round 2, Round 1 prosecution becomes Round 2 defense and vice versa. Teams will not go against the same team as in Round 1. Power match will be based on the win/loss record, subject to numbers 1 and 2 above.
- C. In Round 3, teams will not go against the same team as in Rounds 1 or 2. Power match is subject to this factor. The higher-ranked team, once power matched, will switch sides from the previous round.
- D. In Round 4, prosecution in Round 3 will be defense in Round 4 and vice versa. Teams will not go against the same team as in Rounds 1, 2, or 3. Power matching is subject to these factors.
- E. Team rankings are based on the win-loss and percentage system. The top-ranked team will play the lowest-ranked team in each bracket; the second-ranked team will play the next to the lowest ranked team in the bracket, etc., subject to the various rules of competition.
- F. In an event of a tie, the winning team will be determined by the official presider tie breaker ballot.

- G. Team scores for rounds 1, 2, 3, and 4 will be released to teacher coaches via e-mail the day after each round.
- H. The win/loss of each team will also be released to teacher coaches.
- I. Team scores will not be released for the Elite 8, Semi-Final, or Final rounds of competition.
- J. As a matter of policy, score sheets will not be released to schools. However, the championship team will receive their final round score sheets the week following the final round.
- K. No critiques will be given to teams after the completion of each round. However, presiding judges, scoring attorneys, and students may remain after each round to discuss individual performances.

- G. Each team will compete in at least four rounds of competition. After four rounds, the top eight teams will compete in the Elite 8 round.
- H. Based on win/loss and cumulative scores, the teams are ranked 1 through 8. Teams will be matched using the basketball tournament method, 1 vs. 8, etc.
- I. The Semi-Final round will include the top four teams.
- J. The Final round of competition will include the top two teams. The winning team will represent Riverside County at the California State Mock Trial Competition.
- K. During the Elite 8, Semi-Final, and Final round, if the teams are meeting for the first time, the higher seeded team will switch sides from the previous round. If the teams have met once before, they will reverse the roles of prosecution/defense. If the teams have met twice, a coin flip determines prosecution/defense.
- L. Elite 8, Semi-Final, and Final round scoring is based on a team winning, losing, or tying on each scorecard. The team that wins the majority of the scorecards (excluding ties) is the winner. In the event of a tie (scores are 2-2-1 or 1-1-3), the presiding judge decides the winning team.
- M. To determine the final ranking of teams, the teams will be ranked first by the most wins and second by the highest cumulative percentages. Strength of schedule will not be a factor in determining the top eight teams.

SUMMARY OF PRETRIAL MOTION PROCEDURES

- Presiders are encouraged to challenge the attorneys with questions about the case law during pretrial arguments.
- The hearing is called to order.
- The presider asks the defense to summarize the arguments made in the motion. The defense has four minutes. The presider may interrupt to ask clarifying questions. The time spent answering the presider's questions is not included in the four-minute time limit.
- The presider asks the prosecution to summarize the arguments made in the motion. The prosecution has four minutes. The presider may interrupt to ask clarifying questions. The time spent answering the

presider's questions is not included in the four-minute time limit.

- The presider offers the defense two minutes of rebuttal time. The rebuttal time is used to counter the opponent's arguments. It is not to be used to raise new issues.
- The presider offers the prosecution two minutes of rebuttal time.
- At the end of the oral arguments, before ruling, the presider asks students if they would like 30 seconds to consult with teacher/attorney coaches regarding any trial irregularities.
- The presider will rule on the motion and begin trial.

SUMMARY OF TRIAL PROCEDURES

- Attorneys present physical evidence for inspection.
- Presider states charges against the defendant.
- Prosecution delivers its opening statement.
- Defense may choose to deliver its opening statement at this point or may wait to open after the prosecution has completed its case in chief.
- Prosecution calls its witnesses and conducts direct examination.
- After each prosecution witness is called to the stand and has been examined by the prosecution, the defense cross-examines the witness.
- After each cross-examination, prosecution may conduct re-direct examination of its own witnesses if necessary.
- After the prosecution presents all its witnesses, defense delivers its opening statement (if it did not do so earlier).
- Defense calls its witnesses and conducts direct examination.

- After each defense witness is called to the stand and has been examined by the defense, the prosecution cross-examines the witness.
- After each cross-examination, defense may conduct re-direct examination of its own witnesses if necessary.
- Prosecution gives its closing arguments, and then defense presents its closing arguments. No questioning during closing arguments.
- Prosecution and defense present rebuttal arguments.
- At the end of the trial before ruling, the presider asks students if they would like 30 seconds to consult with their teacher/attorney coaches regarding any trial irregularities.
- Students select an MVP for the other team.
- Presider deliberates and announces the verdict in court.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Pretrial Motion (X2)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear and concise presentation of issues and appropriate use of case materials.• Well-developed, reasoned, and organized arguments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solid understanding of legal reasoning behind the arguments.• Responded well to presider's questions and maintained continuity in argument.• Effective rebuttal countered the opponent's argument.
Opening Statement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided a case overview.• Theme/theory of the case was identified.• Overview of key witnesses and their testimony.• Introduction of attorneys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outlined burden of proof.• Request for relief (what the side is asking the court to decide).• Mention of applicable law or statutes to be covered.
Direct/Re-Direct Examination	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions required straightforward answers and brought out key information for her/his side of the case.• Attorney properly introduced exhibits and, where appropriate, properly introduced evidence as a matter of record.• Attorney properly phrased and rephrased questions and demonstrated a clear understanding of trial procedures.• Responded to objections utilizing rules of evidence or the rules of competition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attorney made effective objections to cross-examination questions of her/his witness when appropriate.• Attorney did not make unnecessary objections and used only those objections listed in the Summary of Evidentiary Objections.• Throughout questioning, the attorney made appropriate use of time.• Attorney avoided leading questions.• Did not ask opinion questions unless the witness is an expert.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Cross-Examination	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attorney made effective objections to direct examination (of the witness she/he cross-examined) when appropriate.• Used narrow questions that suggested a yes or no answer and did not allow the witness to provide a narrative explanation.• Responded to objections utilizing rules of evidence or the rules of the competition.• Followed protocol to introduce exhibits.• Utilized objections to forward the case and not just to throw the other side off their game; unnecessary objections, excessive interruptions, and/or obstructionist behavior should not be rewarded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attorney properly phrased and rephrased questions and demonstrated a clear understanding of trial procedures.• Attorney exposed contradictions in testimony and weakened the other side's case.• Impeached the witness without appearing to harass or intimidate him/her.• Referred to witness testimony and followed rules for showing the testimony to the witness.• Demonstrated a clear understanding of the rules of competition and of evidence.
Witness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Witness was believable in her/his characterizations and presented convincing testimony.• Witness was well prepared for answering the questions posed to her/him under direct examination and responded well to them.• Witness responded well to questions posed under cross-examination without unnecessarily disrupting or delaying court proceedings.• Witness understood the facts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Witness testified to key facts in a consistent manner and avoided irrelevant comments.• Witness did not disrupt the trial with unreasonable inferences.• Played up the strengths of his/her statements and adequately explained the weaknesses.• Did not use notes.• Sounded spontaneous and not memorized.• Did not wear a costume.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Closing Arguments (X2)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attorney's presentation contained elements of spontaneity and was not based entirely on a prepared text.• Attorney incorporated examples from the actual trial, while also being careful not to introduce statements and evidence that were not brought out during the trial.• Outlined the strengths of his/her side's witnesses and the weakness of the other side's witnesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asked for the verdict, including a request for relief, and explained why the verdict was justifiable.• Effective rebuttal countered the opponent's arguments.• Reviewed the exhibits and how they helped the case.• Stated the applicable law or statutes and how they supported the side's theory.
Clerk	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present and punctual for trial.• Performed her/his role so that there were no disruptions or delays in the presentation of the trial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducted themselves professionally without attracting any unnecessary attention.• Properly used verbal and visual time warnings.
Bailiff	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present and punctual for trial.• Performed her/his role so that there were no disruptions or delays in the presentation of the trial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducted themselves professionally without attracting any unnecessary attention.• Knowledgeable about script and role in trial and followed script.

GUIDELINES FOR (1-10) SCORING

Attorneys	Score	Witnesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent understanding of the case, rules, and legal issues. Questions and arguments advanced case and didn't ask for answers that asked for unfair extrapolations. Persuasive and articulate delivery made without use of notes. Thought well on feet, in control of the situation, and responded to the other team's presentation. Objected when appropriate; clearly understood how to respond to objections. Maintained eye contact with the judge and witnesses, spoke in a clear and audible voice. Did not verbally address the attorney scorers. 	9-10 Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent understanding of case, witness statements, and exhibits (if applicable). Convincing, credible presentation. Answers were thorough, accurate, persuasive, and natural, not scripted. Didn't provide answers that embellished facts and/or went outside scope of case materials. Maintained eye contact with the judge and student attorneys; strong audible voice. Did not verbally address the attorney scorers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good understanding of the case, rules, and legal issues. Most questions and arguments advanced the case and didn't ask for unfair extrapolations. Mostly persuasive and articulate delivery; used notes occasionally. Able to think on feet some of the time. Most objections were appropriate; usually understood how to respond to objections. Mostly maintained eye contact with the judge and witnesses. Did not verbally address the attorney scorers. Mostly spoke in a clear and audible voice. 	7-8 Above Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good understanding of witness statements and exhibits (if applicable). Mostly convincing, credible presentation. Most answers were thorough, accurate, persuasive, and mostly natural, not memorized. Rarely provided answers that embellished facts and/or went outside scope of case materials. Sometimes forgot to maintain eye contact with the judge and student attorneys. Mostly spoke in a clear and audible voice. Did not verbally address the attorney scorers.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Attorneys	Score	Witnesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair understanding of case, rules, and legal issues. • Verbally addressed the scoring attorneys as if they were a jury. • Used notes, sometimes stumbled on delivery. • Some questions and arguments advanced the case and did not ask for unfair extrapolations. • Prepared for trial but often relied on preparation and not responding to the other team's presentation. • Missed appropriate opportunities to object; didn't always understand how to respond to objections. • Sometimes forgot to maintain eye contact with the judge and witnesses. • Sometimes difficult to hear. 	5-6 Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair understanding of witness statements and exhibits (if applicable). • Verbally addressed the scoring attorneys as if they were a jury. • Somewhat convincing, credible presentation. • Answers not always thorough, accurate, or persuasive; sounded scripted, not natural. • Some answers embellished facts and/or went outside scope of case materials. • Sometimes forgot to maintain eye contact with the judge and student attorneys. • Sometimes difficult to hear.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated little understanding of case, rules, and legal issues. • Needs work on poise and delivery; did not respond to the other team's presentation. • Read mostly scripted questions; relied heavily on notes. • Few questions and arguments advanced case; may have asked questions that required unfair extrapolations. • Struggled to understand when to object and how to respond to objections; used objections to interfere with other team's presentation. • Often forgot to maintain eye contact with the judge or witnesses. • Often difficult to hear. • Verbally addressed the scoring attorneys as if they were a jury. 	3-4 Below Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggled to understand witness statements and exhibits (if applicable). • Presentation not convincing, credible; often unrealistic. • Answers were generic and often didn't seem natural, but based on memorized script; sometimes stumbled over responses. • Often provided answers that embellished facts and/or went outside scope of case materials. • Often forgot to maintain eye contact with the judge and student attorneys. • Often difficult to hear. • Deliberately used up the opposing counsel's time.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Attorneys	Score	Witnesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not understand the case, rules, or legal issues. Not persuasive or articulate in delivery; read entirely from script. Not prepared for trial; not able to think on feet. Questions and arguments didn't advance the case; asked for questions that required unfair extrapolations. Did not know when to object or how to respond to objections. Disruptive/disrespectful/inappropriate actions. Did not maintain eye contact with the judge or witnesses; unclear or inaudible voice. Verbally addressed the scoring attorneys as if they were a jury. 	1–2 Far Below Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not understand witness statements and exhibits. Presentation not convincing or credible; seems unrealistic. Answers were not thorough, accurate, or persuasive, and didn't sound natural; stumbled over responses. Answers not consistent with the facts and/or went outside scope of case materials. Did not maintain eye contact with the judge or student attorneys. Weak, inaudible, or unclear voice. Disruptive/disrespectful/inappropriate actions. Gave excessively long, non-responsive answers on cross examination to deliberately use up opposing counsel's time. Verbally addressed the scoring attorneys as if they were a jury.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Clerk	Score	Bailiff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very professional demeanor. Clear understanding of procedures; excellent time keeping. Clear, audible voice when issuing verbal warnings (if applicable). Visual warnings were clearly visible to student attorneys. Able to think well on feet, in control of situation. 	9–10 Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very professional, believable presentation. Consistent use of clear and audible voice and eye contact. Consistently natural delivery of script. Excellent understanding of role and procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional demeanor. Good understanding of procedures; good time keeping. Mostly spoke in a clear, audible voice when issuing verbal warnings (if applicable). Visual warnings were mostly clearly visible to student attorneys. 	7–8 Above Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional, believable presentation. Used clear, audible voice and eye contact a lot of the time. Knew script and delivery was mostly consistently natural. Good understanding of role and procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good demeanor. Basic understanding of procedures; able to keep time. Was heard when issuing verbal warnings (if applicable). Visual warnings were visible to student attorneys. 	5–6 Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly natural, believable presentation. Audible voice, some eye contact. Apparent that script was memorized. Understood role and procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demeanor lacked professionalism. Demonstrated little understanding of procedures; time keeping not entirely accurate. Not clear or audible when issuing verbal warnings (if applicable). Visual warnings may not have been visible to student attorneys. 	3–4 Below Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation not realistic, lacked professionalism. Voice not all that clear or audible; little eye contact. Used notes, stumbled with script. Did not have a good understanding of the role and procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete lack of professionalism. No understanding of procedures; time keeping was inaccurate. Verbal warnings not used or completely inaudible (if applicable). Verbal warnings not used or visual warnings not at all visible. Disruptive/disrespectful/inappropriate actions. 	1–2 Far Below Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete lack of professionalism. Voice not audible or clear; no eye contact. Relied almost entirely on notes/script. Did not understand the role and procedures. Disruptive/disrespectful/inappropriate actions.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION



RIVERSIDE COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
EDWIN GOMEZ, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools