

**EDUCATION**

## Louisville High kids judge mock trial a success

By **Delilah Brumer**  
Correspondent

In a packed courtroom in downtown Los Angeles, the teenage bailiff, dressed in a bright pink blazer, announced the judge's entrance with a booming yet calm voice. Spectators sat enthralled by the proceedings as young prosecutors called equally young wit-

nesses to the stand. The trial wasn't real, but the stakes were high.

Iterations of this scene played out in dozens of rooms throughout the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles from March 22-24, as more than 550 ninth-through 12th-grade students took part in the 43rd annual California High School Mock Trial Championship.

The students argued through the stages of a fictitious murder case, competing in several rounds. The case, dubbed *People v. Clark*, followed an executive of a made-up medical company accused of stabbing its CEO, after the company's high-stakes initial public offering went awry.

Trinity Pacific Christian School in  
**MOCK TRIAL » PAGE 5**

### Mock Trial

FROM PAGE 1

Thousand Oaks won the highly competitive statewide contest. But the 14 students from Louisville High School in Woodland Hills came away with an upbeat outlook on the challenges they faced.

After, all, they were the sole school that scored high enough in previous rounds to represent Los Angeles County at the fiercely competitive event.

One of the future lawyers from Louisville High was 17-year-old Ruby Dixon, who has been involved in mock trials since she was just a kid in sixth grade.

"Mock trial is the main reason I want to go to law school," Dixon said. "I'm really passionate about it and I've built amazing friendships and bonded with the team."

Once Dixon graduates from Louisville this spring, she plans to study history on the pre-law track. She hasn't committed to a college yet, but has already received multiple acceptances, including from UC San Diego and Fordham



PHOTO BY MARIA CUE

Mock trial team members from Louisville High School are Eiry Kilroy, front row at left, Eva Lloyd, Ella Sutherland, Carissa Becker, Gianna della Santina, Emma Aviv, Hailey Koffman, Kalliopi Althouse and Santana Karno Garcia. In the back row are Ruby Dixon, left, Mary Piscatella, Falon Rushton, coach Michael Telesca, Maddie Vielma and Stephanie Hage.

University in New York.

Louisville High's coach, social studies teacher Michael Telesca, has led the team at the Catholic all-girls school in Woodland Hills since 1983. "It's thrilling," he said. "Even though I've done this for a long time, (the state competition) was new for the students, so that means a lot."

Telesca said the team spent several hours a week after school preparing for the competition throughout the year.

"Nobody gets this far

without putting a lot of work into it," Telesca said. "For months, their cars were the last ones in the school parking lot every day."

Hailey Koffman, 18, said of the contest that unfolded in a real courtroom, "I've learned self-advocacy and it's been really empowering. In the courtroom, there's times where you feel unsure. But you learn to push your boundaries and that's when you have the most fun."

"I've been able to grow



PHOTO BY DELILAH BRUMER

Louisville High students make the defense's case March 22 during mock trial at Stanley Mosk Courthouse.

and develop that ability to respond to questions eloquently and think about (my) answer," said 17-year-old student Eiry Kilroy.

The students acted out every courtroom role, giving intense opening statements, raising objections and cross-examining witnesses.

Louisville won their first round, but didn't end up placing in the competition's top scoring schools overall after losing a round on the second day. But the girls — including many aspiring attorneys — said they learned valuable public speaking

and problem-solving skills.

Teach Democracy, a Los Angeles-based civic education nonprofit, hosted the 2024 statewide mock trial competition, which was judged by actual attorneys.

"It's very impactful for the students and they get this direct knowledge of the judicial system," Teach Democracy Senior Program Director Lourdes Morales said. "It also helps with many other skill sets like presentations and critical thinking."

Louisville High will not be advancing to the national competition, which

### MOCK TRIAL RESULTS

The following teams placed in the top eight, with Trinity Pacific Christian School advancing to nationals:

**First:** Trinity Pacific Christian School, Thousand Oaks

**Second:** Torrey Pines High School, San Diego

**Third:** Tamalpais High School, Marin County

**Fourth:** Sacramento Country Day School, Sacramento County

**Fifth:** Polytechnic High School, Riverside

**Sixth:** Centennial High School, Bakersfield

**Seventh:** Dos Pueblos High School, Goleta

**Eighth:** University High School, Irvine

will be held in Wilmington, Delaware, in May, but the girls said the experience was worthwhile regardless.

Dixon said she'll remember the community she built through mock trial as she moves on to college.

"I've made some of my closest friends on the team," Dixon said. "I would say (to someone starting out) to enjoy the process and give it your all. Soak up every moment, because it's over way too fast."