

**THE CONSTITUTION WORKS
PROPOSAL TO
THE HENRY LUCE FOUNDATION**

The Constitution Works (TCW) seeks a three-year grant in the amount of \$45,000 from The Henry Luce Foundation to support Constitution Workers, an after-school, law-related mentoring program. We believe Constitution Workers' goals, activities, and impact are consistent with the Foundation's intent to support "youth at risk with promise" by helping them fulfill their potential through education and the development of leadership skills. Constitution Workers offers high school students a hands-on exploration of the legal field. The program fulfills school-to-work movement mandates by helping students refine academic and professional skills for college, employment, and civic involvement. Support from the Foundation would contribute to the program's expansion and assessment.

Constitution Workers is one component of *TCW's* civic education offerings, which teach today's students how to become tomorrow's active citizens. Through a challenging curriculum, dramatic role play, teacher seminars, staff development, and an after-school program, *TCW* offers teachers and students substantive information about the Constitution and hands-on experience with the methods that make democracy work. Each year, *TCW* serves over 8,000 students and 200 teachers from over 150 schools citywide. Since our 1989 inception, we have worked with over 100,000 students and 4,000 educators.

Constitution Workers is currently budgeted at \$32,160, representing 11% of *TCW's* projected 1999-2000 operating budget of \$285,070. We are soliciting various funding sources for program support.

II. NARRATIVE

1. Program History and Mission

TCW created Constitution Workers in 1992 to further young people's understanding of law and citizenship. The project not only exposes students to the legal field, but also supplements their academic and career development. Constitution Workers engages participants in rigorous learning activities that propel their precollegiate preparation, and grounds them in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. More than 80% of the project's participants are young people of color from underserved schools and communities. Since its inception, Constitution Workers has served over 700 students.

The Constitutional Education Foundation established TCW in 1989 as a permanent legacy to the bicentennial anniversary of President George Washington's inauguration and our nation's constitutional democracy. TCW is the educational arm of the museum of American Constitutional Government, based at Federal Hall National Memorial. The American History Workshop, historians, legal and constitutional scholars, attorneys, and social studies educators from New York City schools developed TCW's print and audio materials.

2. Need Addressed Constitution Workers addresses three distinct yet interconnected issues:

Workforce Preparation Rigid professional standards require complex skills and attitudes necessary for success and advancement. Young people entering the world-of-work will need to demonstrate sophisticated abilities. Early career development prepares them to develop the academic, communication, and technical skills necessary for college and careers in a global economy. Work-based and/or professional mentoring experiences, coupled with challenging curriculum and instruction that emphasize high academic standards, propels this preparation.

Minority Presence in Law Integral to our work is introducing young people of color to the field of law, where minorities have traditionally been underrepresented. *Miles to Go: Progress of Minorities in the Legal Profession* (American Bar Association's Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession. 1998) reported that despite an increase in minority representation in the legal field, people of color remain underrepresented "in most upper-level jobs, especially in the for-profit sector." (Minority presence among partners in large law firms has increased less than 2 percent since 1986, and only .6 percent since 1991.) The report notes that minority lawyers are often isolated from social networks that promote advancement in the field, and have difficulty finding professional mentors. As a result, most minorities leave law firms before they are considered for partner. The attack on affirmative action, particularly in law school admission criteria, also threatens minority entry and growth in the profession.

Civic Awareness Constitution Workers heightens young people's understanding of the Constitution as the *bedrock* of the judicial and legislative structures

that shape democracy and citizenship. Today's youth are less likely to participate in the democratic process. This is in part due to their lack of the information and skills that would strengthen their roles as citizens. (*New Millennium Project. Part I: American Youth Attitudes on Politics, Citizenship, Government, and Voting*. National Association of Secretaries of State. 1998.) About 66% of young people surveyed see few practical reasons to participate in politics, do not know how to influence the political process, and cannot articulate ways government policies affect them. Such attitudes carry over into adulthood. A 1997 UCLA survey noted that 37.6% of college freshmen desire to influence social values; a mere 26.7% maintain political awareness. Most alarming is American adults' ignorance of the Constitution's basic provisions, as assessed by a 1997 National Constitution Center poll.

3. Project Format Constitution Workers is a law-related program that links schoolwork and civics to work-based learning activities. The project addresses academic standards for Government, Citizenship, and Civics, complements high school students' Law and Government classes, and helps students prepare for Regents exams, including through written analysis of primary and secondary documents. Student outcomes are reflected in three areas:

Knowledge Students:

- Understand the Constitution's relevance in modern day society.
- Understand how legislative and judicial structures function.
- Learn about the people, processes, and institutions that frame law making.

Academic and Participatory Skills Students use Constitution Workers' competencies:

- Analyze and comprehend primary and secondary documents--Supreme Court precedent, constitutional provisions, legal case studies.
- Research, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information for objectivity, accuracy, and point of view.
- Use critical reading and writing skills to interpret data and develop arguments for persuasive debate in culminating role plays.
- Demonstrate effective public-speaking skills.
- Develop and use verbal and written communication skills (such as debate and investigative queries) to convey ideas, facts, and opinions in an effective and reasonable manner.
- Apply information to resolve legal matters with constitutional implications.
- Develop and use critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning to make informed and responsible decisions.
- Work cooperatively with others to develop substantiated, logical, and coherent arguments.

Attitudes and Behavior Students:

- Gain respect for the law making process, the role of lawyers in that process, and the impact of the Constitution on modern-day legal issues.
- Value the impact of professional mentoring.
- Build on their school-based academic and/or law-related studies.
- Acquire workplace skills and behaviors (promptness, completion of assignments, respectful interaction with colleagues, appropriate attire, etc.) that contribute to professional success.
- Apply skills to summer and after-school employment, and use their experience to decide about and/or pursue college education.
- Believe that individual rights and freedoms are balanced by responsibilities.
- Recognize the variety of characteristics and actions of effective, participating citizens.
- Appreciate the importance of “teamwork” as a way to strategically and cooperatively make decisions and resolve conflict.

Each year, Constitution Workers partners 120 eleventh and twelfth grade students (16-18 year-olds from 26 New York City high schools) with public and private sector attorneys. (Please refer to program description, with list of participating schools.) Most students come to the program via referrals from a total of 32 teachers who teach law-related education or manage school-to-work initiatives. Teachers refer students based on academic merit or need (Please see attached teacher letter of support.), or student interest. Students understand that this extracurricular activity bolsters academic achievement and post-secondary education and job opportunities.

Students work with Assistant District Attorneys, Assistants from the New York City Law Department and the Bronx District Attorney’s Office, and partners and associates from Cravath, Swaine, & Moore and Wilkie, Farr, & Gallagher, Winthrop, Stimpson, Putman & Roberts, and Davis, Polk, and Wardwell. (Our lead attorneys are either partners or senior associates who recruit new colleagues to participate in Workers.) Following a “kick-off” event, at which a prominent member of the legal field is the plenary speaker, (Last year, it was Zachary Carter, US Attorney, Eastern District; Queens Borough President Claire Shulman will head off the 1999-2000 program) participants begin their work with volunteer attorneys.

During two-hour sessions, held once a week for six weeks in the fall, groups of 20 students explore with their mentors (largely new associates who rotate sessions, and who are recruited by senior attorneys or partners) the constitutionality of issues, such as curfews, gun ownership, and the death penalty for minors. These issues are at the core of the Constitution Workers’ curriculum (see attached), which prepares students to debate in culminating role plays. (Attorneys developed the curriculum and assist in updating the materials each year.) In weekly meetings, attorneys facilitate students’ understanding, of the Fourth and Eighth amendments, and the judicial and legislative processes. Mentors lead student discussions about constitutional issues, translate complex legal concepts, advise students’ role play arguments, and provide

supplemental materials that support student debates. Students benefit from actual attorney knowledge and experience (rather than relying on textbooks) regarding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the link between law and history.

Students explore the government's judiciary and legislative branches through the two-part curriculum. After the first three weeks of extensive analysis of the judicial system, students dissect the Fourth Amendment and precedent surrounding a search and seizure procedure, while preparing to role play lawyers, judges, special interest experts, and witnesses in a fictional case involving a young offender. Their work culminates in mock suppression and sentencing hearings, held at Fordham University's School of Law. (We hope Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau will present.) The final three weeks immerse participants in the legislative branch as they examine the First Amendment. In this unit, students, as legislators, concerned citizens, and members of special interest groups, confront a hypothetical bill that will ban the sale of all "obscene" music lyrics and images. Each year, a prominent public official addresses the students at the final role play, held at the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. (In 1998, Assemblyman Richard Gottfried was the featured speaker; this coming year, Councilman Adolfo Carrion will be our guest presenter.)

The role plays replicate actual courtroom events. Student teams, representing their firms, compete against one another. They must be ready, as in an actual courtroom, to counter opposing arguments and effectively question witnesses. The drama and the complexity of the legal process are prevalent during these sessions, as is a practiced professional demeanor. Students, for example, must control their anger if they disagree with a statement; they cannot mock or intimidate their peers nor misrepresent their colleagues or clients. Attorneys coach their student teams, conferring with them about evidence, facts, and ways to defend arguments. Again, students benefit from attorneys' knowledge of law, strategic thinking, and experience with trials and hearings.

Attorneys also serve as professional mentors. They inform students about the field of law, the educational credentials and skills the profession requires, and the actual work a lawyer undertakes. In some instances, attorneys have assisted students with resumes and college applications. Students and mentors often sustain their relationships: mentors help students find summer work, act as academic tutors, or become "friends" with whom students stay in touch while in college. The attorneys greatly influence students' lives in ways that enhance their academic, career, and interpersonal lives. (Please see attached letters of support.)

During the summer, between 10-20 of our students participate in the City Bar's prestigious Thurgood Marshall Summer Law Internship Program, an eight-week paid position in Manhattan law firms and corporate legal departments. Last year, 17 students worked in companies including McGraw-Hill Companies, Columbia Law School, the *New York Times*, and the firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. This summer, we placed 10 students in summer positions at places including Thatcher, Profitt, & Wood, Whitman, Breed, Abbott & Morgan, and the New York County District Attorney's Office.

4. Evaluation and Program Effectiveness TCW has relied on a qualitative assessment of Constitution Workers. At the close of Constitution Workers, staff distribute student surveys to determine the program's impact on their school-based law studies and understanding of the Constitution, the challenges they encountered during the course of the program, and the program's impact on their career choices. Surveys indicate they develop a range of intellectual and academic skills, including negotiation, literacy, deliberation, cross-group communication, problem solving, and public speaking. Students also acquire professional behaviors, such as promptness, adherence to dress codes, and timely completion and execution of tasks and assignments.

Students remark that they enjoy working besides practicing attorneys. One student commented: *"I always wanted to be a lawyer and after this program, I realized that you have to put a lot of work and thought into it. But, I know I can meet the challenge."* They identify strengthened skills and have a better understanding of the judicial process and the work required of legislators and lawyers. Said a student: *"I now know how to ask questions and how and what to object to in court. I also have a better and higher knowledge of the Constitution, thanks to the help of all the lawyers."* Students also adhere to a workplace protocol, from mode of dress, to their interaction with mentors, supervisors, and peers, and to their undertaking of the tasks at hand. One student best sums up the experience: *"This program is an excellent way to experience law. I would recommend this to students who are interested in law, because they could see how it works instead of just reading it."*

We learn that students develop professional and personal relationships with their mentors. Volunteer attorneys -- several of whom are people of color -- offer myriad guidance and advice, based on individual experiences in the industry and as a member of the workforce overall. Mentors are firm with students in terms of their role-play preparation, attendance at after-school sessions, and actual presentation at the firms and mock trials/hearings. At the same time, they are nurturing individuals, sometimes helping students through personal and/or academic conflicts.

A survey of our 1998 participants indicated that 93% will enter college in the fall of 1999; 30% will pursue law or a law-related career. Six students noted they had found law-related summer and/or after-school work. Seventy-nine percent of our 1997 survey respondents are in college; 92% of those in school are pursuing law or law-related studies. Students from both years noted that Constitution Workers developed their civic practices, analytical, writing, and research skills, among others. (Please see list of colleges students attend.) The following participants' survey comments best highlight our impact:

The Constitution Workers was a great program and I am very grateful for [your] choosing me as a participant. I look forward to attending the program next fall. (Note: Students who participate during their sophomore or junior years of high school can opt to return.)

*High School Junior
Edward R. Murrow High School
Summer job: Office Assistant
Whitman, Breed, Abbott & Morgan*

I enjoyed meeting all the different types of people. I learned a great deal more about law and the cases behind those laws. The program gave me more insight into the different [types] of law. By the way, I am still in very close contact with my mentor.

*Student
Oberlin College*

We realize that our existing informal assessment is not sufficient. We plan and hope to implement a more sophisticated evaluation of the program, and will need an assessment specialist to help us design tools that include:

- A post- and pre-test of students' constitutional knowledge.
- Interviews with teachers and students to determine how the program's curriculum influences student achievement and future educational and career decisions.
- Feedback from attorneys regarding the program's impact and purpose.
- Analysis of students' law-related studies in the classroom, specifically ways our offerings supplement participants' learning.
- Follow up with prior year's participants to determine their course of study in high school, whether they are college-bound or have entered college, the type of work and extracurricular activities they have undertaken, etc.
- Observations of students during their after-school mentoring sessions.

5. 1999-2000 Programming Our primary goals and objectives are:

I. To reinforce the program's career development component to better prepare students for the workforce. We hope to achieve this through:

- 2-3 career development clinics.
- 2-3 partnerships with additional law firms.
- 3-5 student internships with public officials and/or 1-3 visits with public officials to inform students about local government's role in upholding democratic ideals.

II. To strengthen our relationship with students' teachers to better link classroom instruction to program activities. We propose achieving this through:

- Classroom observation of students' law-related education and other academic activities.
- Visits and/or conversations with participants' teachers to guide our implementation strategies and approaches to ensure students' academic success.

- Maintaining portfolios of student work (research, debate drafts, strategies, use of data and document to support point of view, etc.) to determine knowledge and skills gained.

III. CONCLUSION

Constitution Workers offers students a multi-faceted skills-building opportunity. While learning about law, they gain from professional mentors. As they prepare for culminating role plays, they utilize myriad academic, intellectual, and participatory skills. By adhering to the program's requirements, they develop necessary workforce attitudes and behaviors. Upon completing the program, they are prepared in several capacities to take on productive educational and career activities. Constitution Workers is an intensive program that challenges students to tackle complex issues and ideas, preparing them for future success and leadership.