

Overview: Criminal Mock Trial of Cruel Elia versus Pancho Clos

The Criminal Mock Trial of Cruel Elia versus Pancho Clos is one of fifteen monthly mock trials and related materials written by Senator Judith Zaffirini, PhD, for Judge Victor Villarreal’s Access to Justice: Class in the Courtroom in Webb County Court-at-Law II. It is available for other courts to localize, either in its original format that includes Spanish vocabulary or without it. Its purposes include introducing students positively to our system of justice. What follows is an overview of its content, development, and materials.

Claims: Impersonation, trespassing, breaking and entering

Targeted Audience: 3rd graders

Schedule: 11:30 a.m.: pre-trial activities (jury and court officer selection, etc.); noon: mock trial, followed by photo session; 1:30 p.m.: targeted departure.

Scripts: Originally written in English with heavy use of Spanish terminology and references to local sites throughout, the script reflects the basic steps in a trial and includes social justice lessons and fun facts. An adapted version without most of the Spanish also is available, and appropriate local names and sites easily can be inserted.

A one-page summary and vocabulary list are included in the related handbook. The bailiff receives a modified script with relevant instructions, activities, and dialogue.

Script Template: After the judge’s welcome and introductions, the mock trial begins as participants enter and witnesses are sworn-in, followed by opening statements, testimony by witnesses for the plaintiff and for the defense, closing statements, jury deliberation, deliberation by the Court of Public Opinion, reading of the verdict, and sentencing.

The judge then introduces the mock trial’s director, participants, and script/handbook author; announces the photo session; and invites students to visit the court again.

Supporting Materials: Ready to be adapted for local use are a school participation form (completed in advance by school representative; Teacher Tips (distributed in advance to teachers); overview/list of pre-trial, trial, and post-trial activities and duties to be done—and by whom; printed program and handbook (distributed on-site); lanyards and badges (with titles for jurors, deputy court officers, and members of the Court of Public Opinion; distributed on-site); certificates for students (given to teachers to personalize) and certificates for cast (presented afterward by the judge).

Treats: As they exit, students receive red and green rock crystal sugar pops labeled, “Santa Sweets” (one to keep and one to give), and imprinted gavel and Texas pencils. (The cast is treated to lunch in the judge’s chambers afterward.)