

## DAY IN COURT | Program Description

- "It must be real exciting to be a lawyer."
- "I don't think I want to be a lawyer, I would rather be a judge."
- "I especially liked courtroom number 514. There were no lawyers so it didn't seem like they were speaking a different language."  
7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, St. Stephen School
- The Day in Court "was cool. I wish I could go there again."
- We "had a wonderful experience of a lifetime."  
8<sup>th</sup> grade students, Aptos Middle School
- "Thank you for making this a great experience for us. We really appreciate it. We had so much fun. Keep up the good work!"  
7<sup>th</sup> grade student, St. James School
- "I wanted to tell you again that the students were on fire with their excitement. They talked about it animatedly the next day."  
7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Holy Name School



Superior Court Building

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### A. SUMMARY

The Bar Association of San Francisco, established in 1999 a "Day in Court" Program to conduct tours of the local courthouse, including observation of court and jury trials, for San Francisco schoolchildren. The Day in Court Program has introduced fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders from schools throughout San Francisco to the real world of law. The program has been funded entirely by the Barristers Club, BASF, and the Superior Court.

### B. INTRODUCTION

The BASF has a long history of public service within San Francisco's schools. In 1988 the Barristers established the Lawyers in the Schools Program, which brings young lawyers to San Francisco public and private schools to speak with students on various legal topics. For several years, the Barristers have also run the Law Academy, which provides comprehensive legal training and mentoring to two San Francisco public high schools.

## C. DAY IN COURT PROGRAM

### OBJECTIVES

Courthouse tours for students serve several objectives:

- 1) To enable students (our future jurors, attorneys, judges, and witnesses) to see first-hand the work of the courts;
- 2) To supplement students' classroom study of social science, government, and history by showing the practical effects of the law;
- 3) To develop respect and understanding of the judicial system;
- 4) To improve the public's perception of lawyers and judges;
- 5) To introduce students to careers in the judicial system;
- 6) To teach basic observation, fact-gathering, and critical thinking skills; and

### D. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The BASF Day in Court Committee, in coordination with the San Francisco Superior Court, selects specific dates for the tours. Promotional materials are sent to the San Francisco public and private schools containing the tour dates and asking the teacher to select three specific dates in order of preference. The Program Chair then reviews the requests, and notifies the schools of the dates.

Schools arrange for their own transportation.

A Day in Court tour leader meets the group of students, along with teachers and parent chaperones, at a designated location in the courthouse at 9:30 a.m. The tour leader then provides

each teacher and chaperone a written calendar of the day's trials. The students will then form groups of 8, each accompanied by a parent or teacher chaperone.

The small groups move from courtroom to courtroom to observe a variety of different hearings and trials. The tour leader monitors the courthouse to ensure that the groups are behaving properly and to answer any questions.

At the end of the tour, around 11:30 a.m., a judge meets with the entire group and the tour leader to answer questions. The program finishes at noon.

The BASF is responsible for administering the program. Successful operation of this program requires coordination of several tasks among the Court, the BASF, and the schools; conducting the actual tours; recruiting and training tour guides; and drafting and distributing publications.

*For further information contact*

[diversity@sfbbar.org](mailto:diversity@sfbbar.org)