

NEWS RELEASE

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LOYOLA LAW STUDENTS TEACH

STREET LAW IN AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

"What causes crime? Why do you think people commit crimes? How do you explain these statistics regarding Chicago crime?"

Answering voices rang out, hands shot up spontaneously--minds almost visually whirred as opinions clashed and points were made.

Such activity would not be unusual in a class of law students; however, these pupils are Lincoln Park High School students participating in Loyola University's School of Law Street Law Program. Their teacher is Jo MacKenzie, a third-year Loyola School of Law student, one of approximately 15 Loyola law students teaching Street Law courses in Chicago high schools.

Loyola's Street Law Program, founded in 1977, is among the oldest of the 25 such programs in this country. Georgetown University pioneered the program in 1972.

"This is a clinical skills course for our law students," said Street Law Project Director Terri Engler, J.D., who also taught in the program when she studied law at Loyola. "Law students develop their lawyering skills by explaining law to non-lawyers."

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Student-teacher MacKenzie concurred. "It is helpful to stand on my feet and answer questions off the top of my head, the way a lawyer does," she said, "As I teach these high school students, I relearn so much."

"I'm teaching these students that the law is a good thing; it is there to protect them," MacKenzie continued. "These young adults are learning about their rights as citizens of this country,"

"We theorize a lot in law school," said second-year law student Hope Fiedler who is teaching at Morton West High School in Berwyn. "I have to make law much more practical when I teach. These kids want to know "How does the law pertain to me?" It is exciting to show them that they can learn the law and find answers for themselves."

Law students in the Street Law Program teach a full-length class three to five days a week for a semester, in conjunction with a full-time teacher at a participating high school. The law student-teachers also attend a two-hour seminar with Engler each week, and must coordinate one field trip for their high school class. The law students receive three hours of clinical course credit and may take the Street Law course for two semesters.

High school courses are geared as electives for junior and senior students. A standard Street Law text book, with an Illinois law supplement, guides the course, but it is up to the law student to plan lessons.

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"Street Law is a good transitional course for high schoolers preparing for college," said third-year law student Dave Vlcek. "I teach a rule and then ask 'why?,' and reading statutes is good practice for dealing with difficult college material."

Vlcek, who is teaching at Brother Rice High School, lists the Street Law program among his reasons for attending Loyola's School of Law.

"I have always wanted to teach," he said. "Teaching gives me a lot of satisfaction; it is a thrill to realize that I am inspiring students' thought."

As Fiedler summed it up, "We wouldn't be in law school if we didn't enjoy education."

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