



MARK REIS, THE GAZETTE

Judge David Prince led students in Kevin Vick's constitutional law class at Doherty High School in a discussion on the trial of juveniles as adults.

LOCAL JUDGES BRING LAW TO LIFE IN CLASS

BY JOHN ENSSLIN
john.ensslin@gazette.com

David Prince is a 4th Judicial District judge who made the short list earlier this year for a vacancy on the Colorado Supreme Court.

But he was no match last year for a class of Colorado

Springs high school freshmen who were unmoved by his explanation of how the judicial system works.

"I crashed and burned," Prince recalled. "I suffered the slings and arrows of ninth-graders in

SEE JUDGES • PAGE 5

ONLINE >
in depth

➔ For more information on this program, visit: <http://judiciallyspeaking.com>.

• For more court coverage, visit "The Sidebar" blog at gazette.com

JUDGES: Students pretend to be legislators, jurists

FROM PAGE 3

the morning who were unmoved by the brilliance I was giving them."

Welcome, judge, to Kevin Vick's world. Vick, who has taught a constitutional law class at Doherty High School for the past five years, observed that high school students aren't like the polite adult audiences who will nod their heads, pretend to listen and thank you on the way out.

If you're not getting through to high school students, if you're boring them, they'll let you know, Vick said.

Fortunately for Prince, he and several teachers were able to retool the speaking program into something that does appear to be working.

It's called Judicially Speak-

ing. Over the past year, the program has brought several 4th Judicial District judges into high schools, where they've talked to 789 students in 34 classes.

In back-to-back sessions that Prince and fellow judge Theresa Cisneros did with Vick's classes earlier this fall, they seemed to be getting through.

Instead of just doing a talk with a question and answer session, the judges mix it up with the students.

For the first half of the class, the students play the role of legislators who have to pass laws that determine when a juvenile accused of a crime should be tried as an adult.

In the second half, the students play the part of judges, who then have to apply those laws to some vexing scenarios based on real life

cases.

For example, in one scenario, the students/judges must decide the fate of a 14-year-old who fired a gun into a crowd of students, two of whom were known gang members. The bullet grazed one student's face.

When one group of students determines the 14-year-old should be tried as a juvenile, Prince appoints another group as the court of appeals and plays the part of a district attorney contesting the lower court decision.

"This guy was shot in the face and the judge can't see it," Prince implored the second group of students, who vote 3-2 to overturn the ruling.

In a scenario involving a 15-year-old car thief, Prince comes back to the court of appeals as a public defender.

"This poor kid had problems at home," he said, reminding them that stealing a car doesn't count as serious bodily injury under the laws they had passed.

"It doesn't matter what the ruling is," Prince later tells the class. "I'm appealing it."

Vick, a teacher at Doherty for 10 years, sees several benefits to the program.

One of them is conveying "the notion that judges are human beings and their job is very, very difficult."

That's a lesson 16-year-old Aaliyah Sanders came away with after her brief stint as a judge.

"It's harder than it looks on TV," said Sanders, a junior at Doherty. "It's easier to understand — rather than your teacher just talking — to get it firsthand from someone who is doing it day to day."