

# Local judges' education program could go statewide

By Thea Skinner

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A high school civics education program created by Fourth Judicial District judges is catching the eye of other educators and moving forward with a goal of statewide implementation.

More than 2,000 students in the Pikes Peak region have participated in the program, called Judicially Speaking, Judge David Shakes said.



Shakes

The program is designed to inform students about the role of judges, the rule of law, and importance of remaining impartial. Experiential interactive lessons are a part of the curriculum that guide youth through the task of being a judge.

The program was designed by teachers and students at Doherty and Sand Creek High Schools, and now judges teach the program to all high schools in the judicial district.

Judge Shakes and Judge David Prince began the program in 2009, at the direction of a former Colorado Supreme Court chief justice who wanted to increase community involvement.



Prince

Judges and magistrates, some residing in Denver, observed the teachings in local classrooms. Denver Chief Judge Robert Hyatt and Center of Education

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in Law and Democracy Executive Director Barbara Miller observed the program in action.

"We have plans to think about material and help judges tweak their program," Miller said.

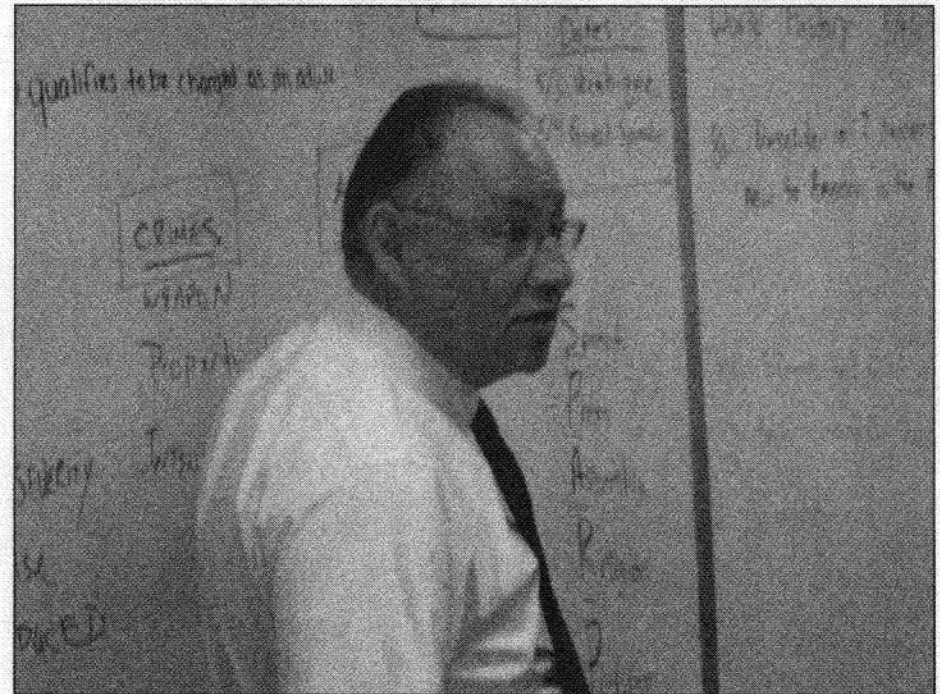
The center will help develop a pre-lesson for teachers and support a presentation at the center's annual conference in December, in hopes to initiate the program statewide.

The program got its start with suggestions from the ninth grade civic team at Fountain-Fort Carson High School in January and input from School District 11 evolved into the program.

Teachers seem to appreciate the program.

"This is our first year teaching ninth grade civics and this program has made this come alive for our students," said Fountain-Fort Carson social studies teacher Amber Jeffords. "The students have also commented that they had no idea what judges really did prior to this program."

A small-group model allows students to learn by experiencing the curriculum. Students consider circumstances that would determine when juveniles should be tried as adults. Students work as a group to develop the law that the judge should apply. Each group reports their scenario as to what they should do



Submitted photo

Judge Gilbert Martinez, former chief judge of the Fourth Judicial District, guides students during the Judicially Speaking class. The program was initiated in 2009

to avoid decisions based on emotion.

Students become a legislature, then the judicial department, to apply the law they write. Out of three cases students decide to refer youth to an adult court.

Students analyze real-life cases, such as a student accused of murder or a 14-year-old drug, related manslaughter charge as a result of a car accident.

"What really hit home to me was

hearing a student say we have to follow the law as legislatures that we passed a few minutes ago — that was inspirational. The student got the point," Shakes said. "Judges show that we are not the only authority. We get students to understand that we operate within the rule of law."

For more information, visit [www.judiciallyspeaking.com](http://www.judiciallyspeaking.com). • CSBJ