



Copyright © 2013  
Record Gazette  
Reprinted with  
permission.

## NEWS

### Beaumont High awarded for civic engagement

BY DAVID JAMES HEISS

Record Gazette

Published: Tuesday, May 21, 2013 12:06 AM CDT

Mock elections, mock trials, and peer mediation has been anything but mockery for Beaumont High School's students.

Civic programs there have been lauded with the state's Civic Learning Award, delivered last week by representatives from the Chief of Justice of California and the State Superintendent of Education, and local officials joined a few teachers and students who shared insight into the three programs that were being recognized.

"Those of us in the court system see the results of those who are not interested in civic duty," said Riverside County Superior Court Judge Mark Cope, who was among the dignitaries that made remarks after a tour of the school's programs. "In civic duty, people see things like jury duty as a burden, and try so hard to get out of it. Programs like yours help students understand the importance of civic responsibility — lest you give others the right to tell you what to do with your life. This is an outstanding program, and I'm proud of you."

Social studies teacher David Vanderpool gave an overview of how he integrated a mock trial into his classes, in which students engaged in a trial centered around alleged hazing incidences involving drug use within a coed social club at a high school.

Every student is given a role, such as jurors or prosecutors, and are given the opportunity to cross examine, redirect, and experience various courtroom procedures.

"I encourage my students to not just memorize their roles, but to become their roles — to become the witness. It's fun, and they learn in the process how to work in teams, to work with others, and learn how to make logical arguments."

Economics teacher Brandon Tedrow and a few students talked about the school's peer mediation program, in which students are involved in solving problems among their peers, and come up with suggestions and conclusions that can stave off more serious disciplinary measures at the administrative level.

"It allows students to take ownership in their school, and even abate situations before they get out of hand," Tedrow said. "It encourages students schoolwide to work things through before they escalate, and it makes it seem like teachers aren't always the bad guy, when their own peers get involved" and keep each other in check.

World history and government teacher Pat Bush gave a presentation on the school's mock election, in which 1,215 students participated, though the results were skewed due to a "technical issue," Bush said. "We were able to teach students about where they stand on the political spectrum, and tied it to the presidential debates and national debates, like sequestration and the state propositions," Bush said. "It gave kids a chance to participate in a real election; and it gave an idea of what kids are looking for, which helped us use that information as we moved along in the semester. Our goal was to ensure that students felt that there is a need to participate in the process, if they want to see change."

Superintendent Maureen Latham thanked teachers and students for their accolades.

"It is my privilege to commend our students, Mr. Vanderpool and his colleagues, Mr. Bush and Mr. Tedrow, for promoting the most notable efforts of a public education — an opportunity for students to participate in civic learning and service."



Principal Marilyn Saucedo, mock trial adviser David Vanderpool, Superintendent Maureen Latham and Judge Mark Cope.

Beaumont city councilwoman Brenda Knight said, "We have a crisis in our country when it comes to an informed citizenship. I'm so pleased in what I see here of your efforts."

Jeffrey Villavicencio, a junior and the president of the school's Interact Club, said, "Sadly, there's not enough contributions in the world" when it comes to civic involvement, and acknowledged, "Some of us would not be here if it weren't for the contributions of their community."

*Staff Writer David James Heiss may be reached at [dheiss@recordgazette.net](mailto:dheiss@recordgazette.net)*

Copyright © 2013 - Record Gazette

[\[x\] Close Window](#)