



PRESS RELEASE

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El Monte Union Seniors Immerse Themselves in Compelling Mock Murder Trial, "People vs. Hayes"

EL MONTE – Fernando R. Ledesma High School (FRLHS) students delved into the complexities of the legal system through a realistic mock murder trial experience on March 15, gaining insight into the workings of the modern judiciary firsthand.

Dubbed "People vs. Hayes," the mock murder trial served as the final project for FRLHS seniors. The murder trial simulation aimed to foster a deeper understanding of court proceedings and encouraged students to use their critical thinking, research, and public speaking skills throughout the trial.

"The most enjoyable part of mentoring students is when I can successfully build a positive relationship with them," FRLHS social science teacher Jason MacLellan said. "At the beginning of each quarter, most of my students dread the idea of performing an academic activity in front of their peers, parents, and teachers, but I always believe they will rise to the occasion, and in the end, they are thankful for the opportunity and proud of what they did."

FRLHS students rigorously prepared for the mock trial, analyzing a comprehensive 66-page case packet over three weeks. Student leaders from the prosecution and defense were tasked with assigning roles for the trial. Each team spent time before and after school strategizing and crafting compelling arguments for the big day.

Students were tasked with roles portraying significant courtroom characters, including prosecutors, defense attorneys, witnesses, clerks, and bailiffs. The mock trial aimed to help prepare students for their college and career journeys, and provide them with a deep understanding of civic responsibility as they prepare to enter the real world.

"I was extremely nervous at first to have to speak in front of the school community but, overall, I have enjoyed the process of coming out of my personal bubble and working with my peers," FRLHS senior and mock trial defense lawyer Valeria Arroyo said. "This experience has really opened my eyes to the injustices some may face and I have gained more of an interest in learning about our legal system."

FRLHS senior Heidi Gill, who served as lead counsel for the prosecution, provided the trial's pivotal moment with a skillful cross-examination and interrogation of the defendant, which revealed a compelling motive that ultimately swayed the judge to convict the defendant.

"I am very proud of our Fernando R. Ledesma seniors for doing such an incredible job with the trial," Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. "This course not only allows them to learn more about the justice system in a structured environment but also pushes them out of their comfort zones to work cohesively together. As a District, we believe it will have a positive impact on how they navigate challenging circumstances in the future."

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD FRLHS MOCK TRIAL 1: Fernando R. Ledesma High School seniors participated in a mock murder-trial simulation, which immersed students in the intricacies of the legal system. Students portrayed significant courtroom characters, including prosecutors, defense attorneys, witnesses, clerks, and bailiffs for their final project on March 15.

EMUHSD FRLHS MOCK TRIAL 2: Fernando R. Ledesma High School seniors call up witnesses to the stand and bring forward evidence during a mock murder trial simulation as part of their final project on March 15. The event is part of El Monte Union High School District's efforts to provide students with hands-on, enriching educational experiences.

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The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.