



CAPITAL REGION CAREER & TECHNICAL SCHOOL NEWS RELEASE

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Students from New Visions: Law & Government class, Brookwood Secure Facility tested on Constitutional knowledge during mock Congressional hearing

Video link connected students, judges, teachers and audiences in Albany, Claverack

Although their locations were near opposites: a spacious, formal hearing room at the State Education Building in Albany vs. a simply furnished classroom at Brookwood Secure Facility in Claverack, the students' command of the U.S. Constitution was equally evident, when they participated via video link in mock Congressional hearings on Dec. 16 held as part of a "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution" event.

Teams of high school seniors from the Capital Region BOCES Career & Technical School's New Visions: Law & Government class and incarcerated students enrolled in a college course at Brookwood Secure Facility prepared for months for hearings, which were held through the New York State Bar Association's Law, Youth and Citizenship (LYC) program. Richard Bader, Esq., teaches the New Visions class, while James LeCain teaches at Brookwood.

"Our New Visions and Brookwood students served as expert witnesses on the country's founding principles and Constitutional law, and they had to answer questions posed by judges who are legal and educational experts," said Bader. "The students were put to the test not only by the judges, but also before their peers, teachers and an audience of parents, educators and LYC officials. They successfully explained the philosophical and historical foundations of the American political system, related them to modern-day society, and defended their own positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues."

Each team and site had its own panel of judges, and the Brookwood students' identities were not revealed. However, using distance learning – a streaming video link – each location's teams could listen to the hearings, view the judges and share comments and questions.

"The video-linked 'We the People' hearing on Dec. 16 was very similar to what students participate in throughout the state and the nation, except usually the teams don't get to see other teams testify," said Eileen Gerrish, Director of Law, Youth & Citizenship (LYC) at the New York State Bar Association. "Besides preparing ahead, the New Visions and Brookwood students really had to think on their feet, which was exciting for them and for those of us in the audience, as well."

According to Gerrish, the LYC program "promotes citizenship and law-related education in schools throughout New York state, assisting educators such as New Visions' Bader and Brookwood's LeCain in creating opportunities for students to become citizens able to participate fully in democratic society."

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Law, Youth and Citizenship Committee Chair James Hanlon of Clarence, N.Y., commented, “The Law Youth and Citizenship Committee is very excited about the ‘We the People’ hearing demonstration utilizing distance learning technology. We thank Richard Bader, LYC member and teacher at New Visions Law & Government in Albany, for agreeing to participate in the demonstration along with a class from the Brookwood Secure Facility. This unique event is the first of its kind utilizing distance learning technology. LYC understands that the use of technology in the classroom continues to grow, and we are proud to support this growing trend.”

Students in New Visions: Law & Government attend class for the first half of their school day, five days a week, at the State Education Building in Albany, across from the State Capitol. The program immerses high school seniors in the workings of the legal and judicial systems, state and federal government, public policymaking and socioeconomic and political issues through lecture, writing, focused study, internships, job shadowing rotations, guest speakers and field trips. They also earn honors credits, AP and college credits for their studies.

The Capital Region BOCES provides the course as a cooperative educational service, a class that individual high schools may not be able to offer on their own. Currently, students from seven area high schools are enrolled in the program.

New Visions: Law & Government and Sharon Springs High School senior Natalie Spiess said the course is “very demanding, but exhilarating as well. We have experiences we would not have during a typical school day, and it is great preparation for college.”

Natalie’s mother, Patsy Nicosia, observed the mock hearings on Dec. 16 and echoed her daughter’s view of New Visions. “The Law & Government program is fantastic. Our small school prepared Natalie to enter this challenging program, and now she is able to step away and get a taste of the careers available to her. Given the cost of college, New Visions is giving Natalie a better idea of the type of law she may want to study.”

New Visions programs are currently accepting applications from high school juniors for next fall. An open house for New Visions: Law & Government will be held on Feb. 16 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. at 1015 Watervliet-Shaker Road in Albany (For information, call 862-4816). Open houses will also be held for other New Visions programs; visit www.capitalregionboces.org/CareerTech for details.

New Visions: Law & Government is one of more than 40 programs of study offered to high school and adult students by the Capital Region Career & Technical School. Operated by the Capital Region Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the school enrolls more than 1,200 high school and adult students living in Albany, Schenectady, Schoharie and southern Saratoga counties. For more information, visit [www.capitalregionboces.org/Career Tech](http://www.capitalregionboces.org/CareerTech) .