

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

Release Date:
November 10, 2015

Contact: Julie Hodek, Public Information Officer
United States District Court for
the Northern District of Illinois
219 S. Dearborn St., #2548
Chicago, IL 60604
312-613-5204

SIXTY CPS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN INAUGURAL “COURTROOM AS CLASSROOM” PROGRAM AT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

Chief Judge Castillo welcomes Bowen and Marshall High School students to U.S. District Court

Chicago, Ill.- Last week more than 60 Chicago Public Schools (CPS) high school students traveled to the Judge James Benton Parsons Memorial Courtroom at the Federal Dirksen Building to participate in the Northern District of Illinois’ first “Courtroom as Classroom” program. The purpose of the new program is to introduce young people in Illinois to the court and professions in law and law enforcement.

The students, all tenth through twelfth graders from Bowen and Marshall Metro Chicago Public High Schools on Chicago’s South and West Sides, met with U.S. Chief District Judge Rubén Castillo, U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman, U.S. Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez, Federal Defender Program Staff Attorney Sergio Rodriguez, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nathalina Hudson and Jeremy Daniel and six other federal law enforcement officers and judicial employees.

“One of my main goals as Chief Judge is to open the doors to the community, especially to young people,” said Judge Castillo, who was raised in Chicago’s West Town neighborhood.

The panelists, many of whom themselves also grew up on Chicago’s South and West Sides, shared with the students information about their family upbringing and personal challenges and their educational and career paths. They urged students to consider careers in law and law enforcement. At the conclusion of the panel, the students and panelists were able to chat informally over a pizza lunch.

“It is important for the court family to reach out to students because we are all a part of one community. I hope students left the program with a better understanding of the power of mentoring, never giving up on their dreams, and believing that they can overcome any obstacles through hard work and perseverance,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathalina Hudson, who shared with the students the challenges she faced being raised by single mother and growing up on Chicago’s South Side. After graduating from St. Francis De Sales High School, Hudson earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and a law degree from Duke University before becoming an Assistant U.S. Attorney.

Dantrell Cooper, a senior at Bowen High School from South Chicago added, "I really learned a lot about the different areas of law that I could pursue. Being interested in criminal justice, I was able to walk away with more information about the possibilities that exist and the resources available to help me reach my goals. I know that I can overcome obstacles that life presents with hard work and a little help when I need it."

The "Courtroom as Classroom" program is a new initiative of the Northern District's Community Outreach Program, which is designed to provide the public a better understanding of the federal courts. More information about the court's outreach program can be found at <http://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/outreach-program/>

For more information, contact Julie Hodek at 312-613-5204.

###