

## **COMPETITION KICKOFF**

Prior to the pandemic, the CT Kids Court Essay Competition would kick off in May with Kids Speak, an event held at the University of Connecticut school of law. Kids Speak provided an opportunity for students to participate in group exercises, improvisations, debates, and to hear from a panel of experts on diversity issues, educational equity, anti-bullying, and school climate. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, Kids Speak will not take place in 2024. We look forward to the return of Kids Speak in 2025...stay tuned. The Kids Court Competition will proceed without a kickoff.

## **COMPETITION RULES**

Students interested in participating in Kids Court must select one of the six topics listed in this brochure and write a short paper about their chosen topic. Paper length varies depending on division

**Division A**– Grades 9-12 papers must be no fewer than two pages.

**Division B**– Grades 6-8 papers must be no fewer than one page.



## **COMPETITION JUDGING**

The papers will be judged on the student's understanding of the topic, consistency of argument, persuasiveness, civil rights issues addressed, creativity, and thoughtfulness. The five Division A and five Division B students receiving the highest scores on their paper will have an opportunity to compete for prizes in the Oral Kids Court Competition to be held remotely on June 5, 2024 at 4:30 via Teams.

## **PRIZES**

Students may win prizes such as: a medal, certificate, plaque, citation from the legislature or governor, and/or cash prize ranging from \$25.00 to \$350.00.

## **FOR ELIGIBILITY**

All papers must contain a cover page, which includes the student's name, grade, school, town, email address (or telephone number if the student does not have an email address), and title of the paper. All papers must be double-spaced and 12-point font or legibly handwritten. Please submit via email to the addresses provided below **by 5:00 p.m. May 3, 2024.**

Late submissions will not be accepted.

Cheryl.Sharp@ct.gov AND  
Kristen.Parker@ct.gov

# **Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities**



**Presents:  
2024**

## **Kids Court Competition**

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Please send your  
submissions to

Cheryl.Sharp@ct.gov AND

Kristen.Parker@ct.gov

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# **KIDS COURT 2024**

Kids Court is an essay Competition related to the topic of civil and human rights and social justice. The Competition is for middle and high school students in the state of Connecticut. The Competition will raise students' consciousness regarding civil and human rights, diversity, school climate and culture, anti-bullying, equal protection, neighborhood isolation and housing, educational equity, busing, individuality, Covid-19, and much, much more!

## **PURPOSE**

- To support the development of youth leadership and raise consciousness about civil and human rights for all within Connecticut and new England;
- To reduce prejudice and create school environments that encourage mutual respect among students and faculty alike;
- To dissuade discriminatory bullying;
- To assist students in developing debating, writing, and analytical reasoning skills;
- To expose students to legislative and law-making processes.



# **HISTORY**

In 1993, then UConn Law School students Cheryl Sharp and Rae Thiesfield, developed and launched the first Kids Court Competition in the greater Hartford area to educate students about diversity and civil and human rights issues.

After receiving approval from the governor's office in 1996, Attorneys Sharp and Thiesfield-Vann co-chaired the first statewide Kids Court Competition and Kids Speak event. The Competition, sponsored by the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, successfully ran for five straight years, allowing thousands of students to participate.



In 2000, Kids Court was selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as one of the best practice award winners, and received the "Simply the Best" award. Kids Court has been featured on Fox 61 news and in the local paper throughout the state. The CT Bar Association recognized the CT Kids Court program at the 2023 Celebrate with the Stars award celebration.

The 2024 CT Kids Court Competition promises to be an exciting Competition, as social justice and civil and human rights are at the forefront of national conversations.

# **KIDS COURT TOPICS**

**#RacialJusticeEmbraceEachOther**  
Fighting against discrimination in all forms. How do we achieve racial equality for all races and ethnicities?

**#VotingRights**  
Who should have the right to vote and why?

**#EducationAchievementGap**  
Why is there a disparity in academic achievement and what can we do about it?

**#HousingWhereDoIFitIn**  
What can we do to address housing access for all people, including immigrants, undocumented and marginalized people?

**#LGBTQ+AndYou**  
How can we protect the LGBTQ+ community in schools?

**#OuchBullyingHurts**  
How can we safely handle bullying in schools or virtually?



Any student currently enrolled in grades six through twelve, who attends a Connecticut, Massachusetts, or New York school, or is home schooled in these states, is eligible to participate.