Competition Kickoff

The **Kids Court Essay Competition** kicks off on May 22, 2015 with **Kids Speak**, an event which will be held at the University of Connecticut School of Law. **Kids Speak** will provide an opportunity for students to participate in group exercises, improvisations, debates, and to hear from a panel of experts on diversity issues, anti-bullying and school climate. Students are not required to participate in **Kids Speak** in order to compete in the **Kids Court Essay Competition.**

Competition Rules

Students interested in participating must select one of the five topics listed in this brochure and must then 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 and no longer than four pages.

Division B—Grades 6-8 papers must be no fewer than two pages and no longer than three pages.

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 in **June 2015** at the **State Capitol**.

Prizes

Students may win prizes such as: a medal, certificate, plaque, citation from the legislature or Governor, and/or cash prize in the amount of $250, $150, $100, $50 or $25.

For Eligibility

All papers must contain a **cover page**, which includes the student's name, grade, school, town, email address or telephone number and title of the paper. All papers must be **double spaced** and **12 point font** or legibly handwritten. Please submit via mail or email to the address provided below by **June 1, 2015**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

The Commission on
Human Rights and Opportunities
c/o Cheryl Sharp
25 Sigourney Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 541-3400
E-mail: cheryl.sharp@ct.gov

The State of Connecticut

Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

2015

Kids Court Competition

And

Kids Speak Event

May 22, 2015

University of Connecticut School of Law

9:00 am—1:30 pm

Kids Speak

Kids Speak is a day for students from Connecticut to come together and discuss topics related to civil and human rights. This forum will raise students' consciousness regarding diversity, school climate and culture, anti-bullying, equal protection, neighborhood isolation and housing, busing, individuality, and much more!

Purpose

- To educate youth and raise consciousness of diversity as well as civil and human rights within Connecticut and New England;
- To reduce prejudice and create school environments, which encourage mutual respect among students and faculty regardless of differences;
- To dissuade discriminatory bullying;
- To assist students in developing debating, writing, and analytical reasoning skills;
- To expose students to legislative and law-making processes;
- To provide students with an opportunity to use interactive exercises and peer dialogue to resolve important social issues affecting them in a school setting, and;
- To provide students with a voice and an opportunity to be heard.

History

In 1993, then UConn Law School students, Cheryl Sharp and Rae Thiesfield-Vann, 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 Speak and 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 local papers throughout the state.

Kids Court returned to Connecticut in April 2011 and Governor Dannel Malloy provided a brief address to students who participated. The 2015 Kids Court promises to be exciting, with several new schools participating in the event!

Kids Court Competition Topics

#Standing Out: The good, the bad, and the ugly

#Cool Kids: The Social Cost of Social Media

#Safe and Sound: My Neighborhood, My School

#You think you know, but you have no idea: The hidden challenges of living with a disability

#All About That Bass: How does popular culture influence women's rights?

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.