



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Dinwiddie  
Program Title: Middle School Mock Trial  
Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: W. Kevin Massengill  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 

## **Situation:**

Dinwiddie County Public Schools, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program provides specialized learning experiences for students identified as having exceptional abilities or potential, often requiring differentiated instruction and advanced learning environments beyond what it typically offered in a standard classroom.

The Middle School GATE teacher, sought an enriching, hands-on experience for her students that would immerse them in the judicial system. Thinking outside-the-box, she designed two mock trials: *Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Gold E. Locks*, and *Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Mr. Grinch*.

## **Awards Criteria:**

**Innovation** – The Middle School Mock Trial Program is based on the University of Virginia’s Collegiate Mock Trial activity, whereby 6-8 college students compete against other schools in 3-hour trials. Students play the roles of attorneys and witnesses, both of which are scored. Dinwiddie’s Mock Trial program takes this concept a few steps further by adapting the model for middle school students. In order to make the activity more engaging, scenarios were developed based on traditional and popular childhood stories (Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and The Grinch who Stole Christmas). These stories were turned into criminal cases, and were then tried in Middle School Mock Court.

**Virginia Association of Counties  
2025 Achievement Award  
Dinwiddie County: Middle School Mock Trial**

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The Commonwealth's Attorney, who serves as the judge, presides over two separate trials for each "case". There is a morning trial and an evening trial where parents are invited to attend. Each trial has a different jury comprised of students.

The Sheriff's Office Investigators meet with students several times during their prep. They offer answers to questions, provide alternative explanations, as questions, and guide discussions. The Middle School Resource Officer has also volunteered his time to discuss the case with students – covering evidence collection and serving warrants.

Prior to the trial date, students meet with private attorneys to discuss opening and closing arguments and proper questioning of witnesses.

### **Financing and Staffing:**

The cost of this program are minimal. Staff include the GATE teacher, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff's Office Investigators, defense attorneys and Parks & Recreation staff. The only cost is time spent by each of these individuals. Dinwiddie County Public Schools provides transportation to and from the Mock Trial courtroom, using school buses.

## Executive Summary

This program results from collaboration among the Dinwiddie County Sheriff's Office, Commonwealth's Attorney, Department of Parks & Recreation, and Dinwiddie County Middle School's Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. Through the Mock Trial experience, students receive an enriching, hands-on learning experience through immersion in the judicial system through one of two engaging mock trials, fictional yet grounded in legal principles: Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Gold E. Locks, and Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Mr. Grinch. This program fosters civic awareness, public speaking skills, and gives students a deeper understanding of the legal system. The collaboration between legal professionals, law enforcement, and students makes for a powerful learning experience, leaving a lasting impact on future leaders.







## DCPS Students Participate in Educational Mock Trial



Sixth grade gifted students, along with Ms. Stroud's 1st block English Class, participated in a Mock Trial of *The Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Gold E. Locks* on the charges of criminal trespassing, breaking and entering, petty larceny, and destruction of property. The students worked tirelessly building their case and interviewing witnesses. Gold E. Locks



was found guilty of criminal trespass and breaking and entering and is guilty of petty larceny and destruction of property. Many thanks to Ms. Amanda Mann, Commonwealth Attorney, for serving as our judge, Investigator Dooley and Investigator Aponte and George F. Marable, as our legal advisors. (DCPS PHOTOS)

Queenie Cooks:

**Easy  
Cheesy  
Frittatas**

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