

TEACHING TIPS FOR TEACHER COACHES - 2008

A. GENERAL TIPS FOR TEACHER COACHES

1. Attorneys can be of assistance to the teacher by participating in discussions concerning the following:
 - a. introduction to general law involved in this case;
 - b. procedures in civil / criminal trial; burden of proof;
 - c. rules of evidence (explain only simplified rules of evidence);
 - d. law relevant to the case provided in the materials.
2. Brainstorming is a good teacher technique to use for case preparation. Teachers should elicit ideas from students rather than spoon-feed them. Use this technique in reviewing steps of a trial, identifying important facts in the case, identifying important issues, developing arguments, deciding what should be included in opening and closing statements, questioning techniques.
3. During group work, attorneys can take one group and teachers another.
4. All participants must be thoroughly familiar with the simplified rules of evidence and rules of competition.
5. It is important to de-emphasize the competitive aspects of the experience and to stress the educational benefits and enjoyment.
6. Some of the things most difficult to learn are:
 - a. to phrase questions on direct examination that are not leading;
 - b. to introduce documents or physical evidence;
 - c. to follow the formality of court;
 - d. not to ask so many questions on cross-examination that well-made points are lost. Students should be encouraged to recognize what answers to questions made good points so that they know when to stop;
 - e. to tell what they intend to prove in an opening statement and to argue that the facts and evidence presented have proven their case.

7. All participants should speak loudly and clearly; practice this by having each student attorney stand at the far end of the room while interrogating the student witness.
8. As soon as possible, student attorneys should begin formulating questions for use in examination of witnesses, and student witnesses should rehearse their testimony; student preparation will progress more rapidly by simulating actual conduct of the trial than by merely conducting general classroom discussion of the steps in the trial.
9. Courtroom etiquette and decorum should be stressed at practice and observed at trial (e.g., standing when addressing the court; calling the judge "Your Honor").
10. Team members should be coached to address the "jury" during opening statements and closing arguments, rather than to address the judge.
11. Cross-examination should be short and to the point; questions on cross-examination are designed to elicit a particular response from the witness; asking open-ended questions which call for a narrative or explanation (e.g., "how", "why", or "could") may result in testimony which is unexpected and harmful to the cross-examiner's case.
12. Each attorney should be prepared for interruptions due to objections from the opposing team or possibly from the judge on matters such as the relevance of questions or the rationale of the arguments during the closing statement.
13. The witness statements should not be read verbatim in the trial. They serve merely as a point of departure for oral testimony. However, testimony must not be inconsistent with facts set forth in the witness statements.