

PAJARO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District is to educate and to support learners in reaching their highest potential. We prepare students to pursue successful futures and to make positive **contributions to the community and global society.**



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By: Jamie Walton, Aptos High Student
& Mock Trial participant

PVUSD's Participation in the Santa Cruz County Mock Trial Competition - A Student's Perspective

Watsonville, CA, March 3, 2020 - Everyone held their breath as the attorney's voice rang through the courtroom. In the last couple of hours, nearly a dozen witnesses vehemently argued their side of the story— and faced intense cross-examinations from equally determined attorneys. After several fast-paced exchanges, the competition suddenly slowed down as participants and audience alike hung onto every word of the closing statements.

In this year's mock trial competition, high school teams from around Santa Cruz County presented the case of *People v. Matsumoto* in a model of actual courtroom proceedings. At the beginning of the year, each team received a packet of evidence about this fictional case, complete with witness statements and courtroom exhibits. Over the next several months, students worked as defense and prosecution teams to craft the most persuading cases possible. When the competition arrived on February 5th, they played time clerks, bailiffs, attorneys, and witnesses, making the event a unique combination of debate and acting.

And for the first time in 26 years of the county tournament, students represented every high school in PVUSD. Pajaro Valley High School competed for the first time this year after persevering through several challenges. After working tirelessly to pull together a team of committed students, they lost both of their coaches with only a month left before the competition. Undeterred, the team talked to every teacher at their school to find a way to keep the program running until they found a new coach, Ashley Selck. "I really wanted PV to be represented," said Annie Chau, currently a senior at Pajaro Valley High, who started the mock trial team and led the efforts to keep it together. "We have so many bright and ambitious students who don't have the opportunity or the outlet to showcase their talent, and I knew this could be something where our students would be challenged." Their hard work paid off at the tournament, where they won the award for best spirit in the county. Annie also won an award for her incredible leadership.

The other PVUSD teams, Watsonville High and Aptos High, shone just as brightly at the county competition on February 20. Both qualified for the semifinals, meaning that they were among the top four teams in the county and performed in yet another night of challenging competition. The Aptos team also qualified for the finals, where their prosecution team performed their strongest trial of the season and finished second overall in the county. "I couldn't be prouder of the whole team and how everyone performed," commented Anabel Willy, an attorney for Aptos High.

Through months of preparation, practice, and performance, each student who participated in the mock trial program at PVUSD gained something unique, from leadership skills to connections with their community. Everyone, though, gained a glimpse into a new world of thinking and a thrilling experience.

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* Pacific Coast Charter * Watsonville Charter School of the Arts * Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education