

Partnerships in Pipeline: Constitution High School

In 2006, Ballard Spahr entered into a groundbreaking pipeline partnership with the Philadelphia School District, the National Constitution Center, and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to sponsor Constitution High School. This magnet school—whose students are 80 percent minority—is the only Philadelphia School District high school whose theme is civics, democracy, and history.

Our involvement with Constitution High School is multifaceted.

NINTH-GRADE JOB SHADOWING

Since the school's inception, every ninth-grade student has had the opportunity to experience a day of job shadowing at Ballard Spahr. Students learn about different careers within the law firm and larger legal profession. They learn practical skills such as negotiation and contract drafting and engage in job-exploration activities that encourage them to pursue higher education and consider careers in the law.

MENTORING

A select number of students are accepted into the firm's mentoring program and are matched with lawyers, paralegals, or staff. Students are advised on academic and career choices. Ballard Spahr is the first law firm to utilize iMentor Interactive, an interactive software designed to facilitate mentoring of students by business professionals. Mentors also attend Law Day and other legal education activities with students. Ballard clients also participate in this mentoring program.

SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

Every summer we offer paid summer internships to two students. Students work in various departments at the firm with the objective of exposing them to substantive work experience within a range of disciplines.

SCHOLARSHIP

Each June, Ballard celebrates the graduation of the senior class of Constitution High School for American Studies and presents the Diversity = Excellence Scholarship to a student interested in pursuing a career in law.

MOCK TRIAL

Our attorneys coach the school's two mock trial teams. We are proud to have sponsored construction of the school's mock trial room, which was dedicated in November 2008 by Retired Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Sandra Day O'Connor, for whom it is named.

ADVISORY BOARD

Ballard lawyers serve on the school's advisory board and work with students and faculty to provide curricular support. Ballard uses its connections in the Philadelphia legal and business community to enhance the school program.

SERVICE PROJECTS

Ballard staff and lawyers partner with students on several community service projects each year, including Toys for Tots, an annual coat drive for the homeless, Haitian earthquake relief, and a benefit for a community garden.

For more information, please contact Virginia G. Essandoh at 215.864.8192 or essandohv@ballardspahr.com.

WHAT IS A DIVERSITY PIPELINE PROGRAM?

"A pipeline program seeks to increase the flow of racially and ethnically diverse lawyers by raising awareness and stimulating interest in law as a career among diverse students. An effective pipeline program builds interest in law as a career by investing in the academic preparation of students at the elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels."

- Virginia G. Essandoh
Chief Diversity Officer

In 2008, Ballard Spahr's pipeline initiative was recognized as a Best Practice for Effective Community Partnership by the Philadelphia School District.

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