

The Purpose of the Town Hall Mock Trials on Alcohol

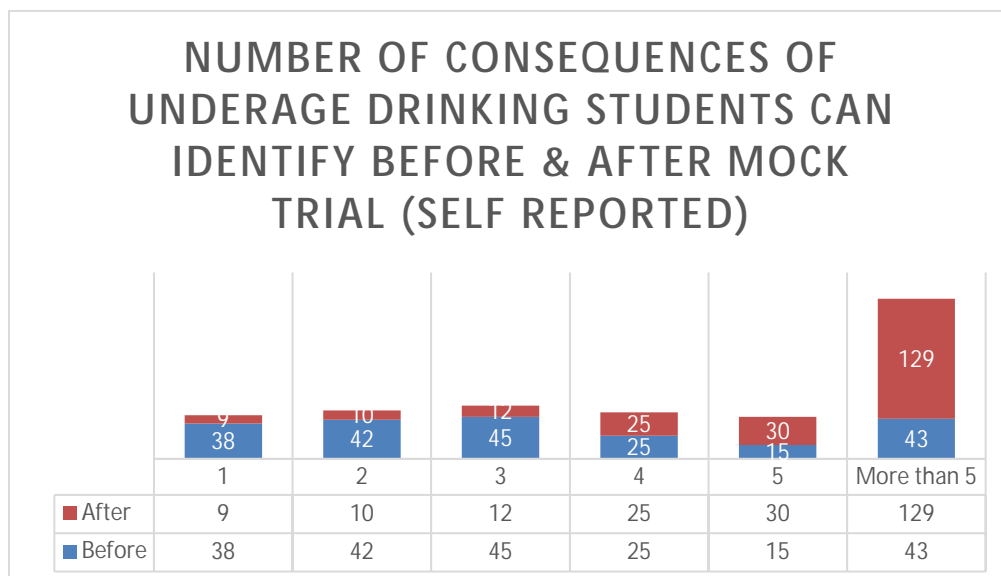
Each year Buffalo / Pepin County Teen Court Co-Coordinator, Annie Lisowski and Marie Ritscher, offer learning opportunities to Teen Court panelists in order to grow their leadership experiences and practice their skills in advocating for and utilizing a restorative justice model in peer-to-peer hearings. Lisowski and Ritscher in previous years had used video mini-trainings, in person trainings and the state teen court conference as professional development for youth panelists, but in 2016 were seeking a fresh approach to appeal to teens who have served as panelists for multiple years. The Buffalo / Pepin County Teen Court Advisory Board shared that mock trials at each school were commonplace a decade ago and school administration may again be interested in partnering to conduct mock trials again. Schools were invested with the intent to educate middle school students about the multiple consequences of underage drinking. In addition, the Buffalo County ATOD Partnership Council was seeking a partner agency to plan a creative Town Hall to fulfill the planning grant requirements by the end of the 2016 calendar year. With a need from the coalition, interest from the schools and panelist training timeline aligned, Lisowski and Ritscher worked to offer mock trial learning opportunities to each of the six school districts in Buffalo and Pepin Counties. As of December 2016 four of the six school districts had their middle school youth participate in the mock trial at their school, reaching 216 middle school students. Lisowski developed the program in partnership with school administration, adapting the mock trial itself from actual teen court experiences related to juvenile alcohol cases in Buffalo and Pepin Counties. The schools encouraged the dissemination of parent handouts related to underage drinking.



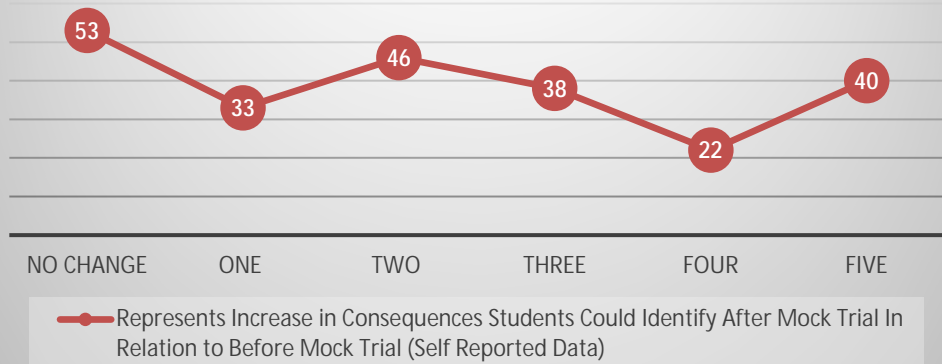
Evaluation Methodology & Results

The Mock Trial program was evaluated with multiple methods. Middle school students who observed the hearing and participated in the deliberation completed a written post-then-pre paper survey evaluation. Teen Court panelists who facilitated middle school student deliberations participated in post-event focus groups. Teachers and school administration provided informal, anecdotal feedback on the outcome of the mock trial for their students. Lisowski and Ritscher also utilized observational data as part of the evaluation plan for the mock trial. Two hundred sixteen students participated in the mock trials at three different school locations. The response rate was 99.5%.

Questions: BEFORE the mock trial today, how many consequences of underage drinking could you identify?
AFTER the mock trial, how many consequences of underage drinking can you identify?



Number of Consequences Students Gained after Participating in Mock Trial



Middle school students were asked to self-report how many consequences of underage drinking they could identify before the mock trial and after. Before the mock trial, only 20% of seventh and eighth graders could name more than five ways alcohol could impact their lives. Immediately following the mock trials, 60% of the students could identify more than five consequences of underage drinking. Nearly 70% of the middle school students increased their understanding of drinking alcohol before 21 years of age by more than two indicators.

Question: Write one possible consequence of drinking alcohol before 21 years of age.

<i>Qualitative Code</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Percentage of Responses</i>
Receive Community Service “You could get community service.”	84	39%
Influence Reputation in School/Community “A damaged reputation within a community.” “Friends, parents or teammates could be viewed less favorably by the community.”	4	2%
Affect Brain Development “It can hurt your growth and development.” “It could damage your brain development.”	38	18%
Increased Risk for Alcoholism “At a higher risk of becoming an alcoholic.”	4	2%
Affect Trust-Based Relationships “Could lose relationships with team, friends, family, and school.” “Trust is diminished.”	4	2%
Impact Future Life Decisions “Could affect your education.”	3	1%
Cause Accident, Bodily Harm, or Death “Possibility of liver failure.” “Serious injury or death.”	23	11%
Named Specific Teen Court Sanctions or Teen Court Process	51	24%

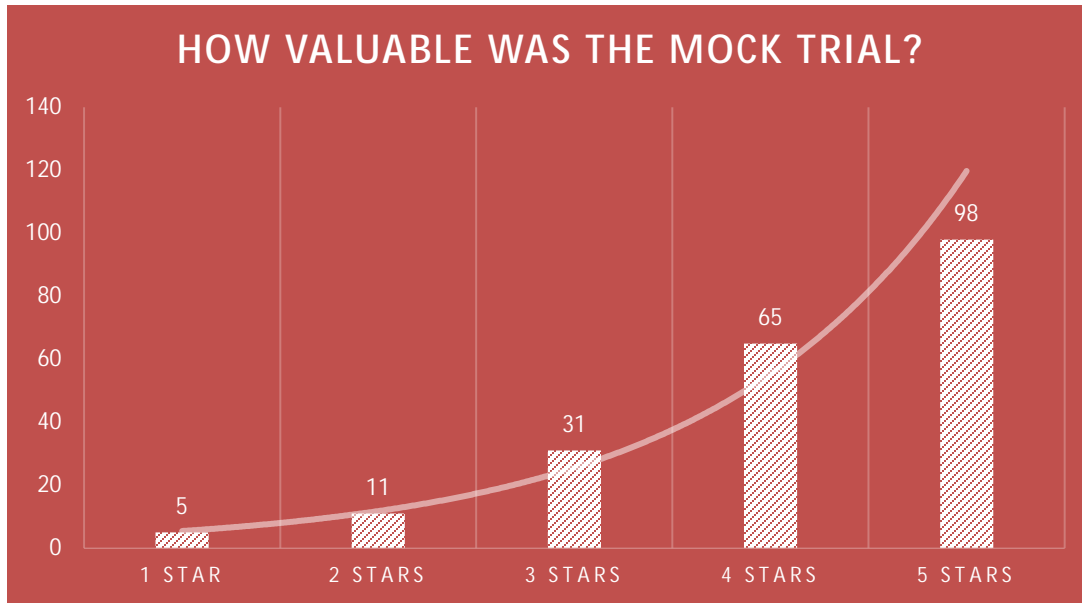
When asked to name one of those consequences students responded offender's receive a punitive consequence, influence one's reputation in the school or community, affect brain development, increase risk for alcoholism, ruin trust-based relationships cause injury or death, and impact one's future life decisions. The top ways that the mock trials made students think differently included: data surrounding underage drinking, how individual decisions and actions impact others, the consequences for poor decision making, the importance of not drinking underage and restorative justice methods utilized in Teen Court.

Question: Explain one thing that Buffalo/Pepin County Teen Court panelists made you think differently about today.

<i>Qualitative Code</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Percentage of Responses</i>
Data Surrounding Underage Drinking "How many people are caught drinking underage." "They made me think about how much alcohol a person can consume."	23	11%
How Individual Decisions/Actions Impact Others "A lot of people get affected from decisions you make." "How drinking can affect your team and other people." "How it might affect the community."	10	5%
Consequences for Poor Decision-Making "About how if you make bad decisions there are really hard and difficult consequences."	36	17%
Importance of Not Drinking Underage "About the importance of not drinking underage." "If you know someone who does [drink], state who it is to [an adult]."	73	33%
Components of Restorative Justice or Teen Court Process "How to repair, restore, rethink young people."	18	8%
Personal Thoughts and Behavior; Peer Pressure "How drinking can hurt your life." "To never drink if your friends want to."	9	4%
Named Specific Teen Court Sanctions	6	3%
No Response, Nothing or Other	35	16%



Question: On a scale of 0 stars (not worth my time) to 5 stars (very worth my time), how valuable was today's Mock Trial to you?



46% of the youth participants believe the mock trial was “very worth my time” (5 stars). 90% of middle school students reported that the mock trial was somewhat or very valuable to them.

Teen Court Panelist Focus Group Qualitative Data

High school students who served as teen court panelists indicated that the mock trials were an opportunity to **apply real-life skills** including **teamwork, group facilitation, communication, organization and planning, and self-efficacy**. This was the first experience for many of the panelists as educators and facilitators with younger students in a formal learning environment. Focus group responses reflected the appreciation for the occasion to practice skills and build their resumes.

Teen court panelists also learned about middle school students, which is **fundamental in being effective peer judges in Teen Court** and as well as role models in the community. High school panelists commented that middle school students were very “**wowed**” by the **underage drinking statistics** and that the **influence of peer pressure** was more significant than they remembered reflecting back on their time as seventh and eighth graders.



The teen court panelists believe they made an impression on the middle school students they worked with at the mock trials. Primarily, panelists reported that “*Students gained knowledge about Teen Court and the **dangers of alcohol use as a teenager.***” The knowledge gained was made possible because of peer teaching and the methods of **restorative justice**. One focus group panelist responded, “*We made a **big impact** in the middle schoolers’ lives because we served as teachers and **they listen to us more than adults.***” Another said of the experience, “*I think **we made a difference** by leading Teen Court and showing middle school students that teenagers can make a difference in other’s lives.”*”