

To: Dr. Weikle & The Board of Education  
From: Dr. Angie Codron, Normal West High School, Principal  
Re: Normal West High School Mock Trial State Champions and National Qualifier  
Date: May 20, 2026



**TEAM MEMBERS:**

- Olive Blick
- Anna Davitt
- Hayden Kuchefski
- Katherine Masters
- Jacob McKinney
- Kylie Pollett
- Raya Radoslavova (*Rye - yah – Rado – sla - vova*)
- Joey Smyder
- Jordan Stovall
- Jackson Wiegner

**COACHES:** Dr. John Bierbaum, Bob White, alumni Sophia Downes, Jolie Pressburger, and Lorelei Kuchefski



Mock Trial is a non-IHSA competitive team sponsored by the Illinois State Bar Association that both Normal Community and Normal West have been active in since the late 1990s. Each fall, nearly 50 teams from across the state get a case that has been written by the I.S.B.A to which they prepare for competition until the state tournament in March. During this preparation, teams come up with a theme, theory, and write all of the parts including their direct and cross examinations, witness presentations, and opening and closing statements.

During this year's state competition hosted at Lincoln Land Community College in March, Normal West High School took home the State Championship to send them to Nationals in Iowa in early May to compete. This is a significant achievement in representing Central IL Mock Trial, Unit 5 Mock Trial programs, and the Normal West program. To put this achievement in perspective, only (3) downstate teams have ever made the final round at the state competition and Normal West is one of these teams – having done it three times in the past (4) years. Coach John Bierbaum has been coaching the team for 20+ years and actually participated in the program as a high schooler. The team is also supported by their “secret sauce” Bob White, a retired attorney who has worked with the Normal West team since its inception in the late 1990s and the nearly (40) students who participated this year on one of the various competition teams.

We also had Mock Trial team and Normal West Alumni, Jolie Pressburger (Law student at The Ohio State), Lorelei Kuchefski (U of I undergraduate and U of I Top Mock Trial team captain), and Sophia Downes (U of I Law School student), come back to support the team in their preparation. At Nationals in Iowa, the Mock Trial team did 4 rounds over two days with Montana, Idaho, Florida, and Iowa and completed 2 practice rounds against California and Texas. Coach John Bierbaum shares, “We learned a lot. Nationals uses a “power ranking” which is great but complicated (lots of factors -- strength of schedule, points, margin of victory). A highlight would be when the team went against the new National champion -- Florida-- they beat them on (1) of (3) ballots – so we really held our own.” OVERALL, NW Mock Trial is now **ranked #16 in the nation**. AND Jordan Stovall was recognized as a **Top 10 witness** in the nation out of (286) witnesses. Kylie, Raya (*Rye - yah*), Anna, Jordan, and Olive won STAR Attorney and STAR Witness awards as well.

I know there is a long list of people that the Mock Trial has already thanked, but I also know that the team is especially grateful for the support from their families who traveled to competitions, made food arrangements, listened when things got challenging, and were able to follow all the communication flow from Dr. Bierbaum when he gets that “new great idea” for what is next to prepare for Nationals. To this end, “House Mom” Kesa Thurman-Stovall was pivotal in making all food logistics – from arriving at the team’s house at 6:45am to start making waffles to getting food delivered to their bus between trials. Connie Blick established fundraising efforts that were instrumental in making sure the team had the



financial means to fill in all of the necessary gaps. And to all of the parents – your support throughout and at Nationals was so positive, supportive, and helped to make this all happen.

I would also be remiss if I didn't share about Dr. Bierbaum who, unrelated to Mock Trial, won the Olive Foster "Teacher of the Year" award through the Illinois State Historical Society which was celebrated at a banquet in mid-April and was accompanied by a monetary stipend.

\*\*\*If there are any family members and/or supporters specifically here with the Mario Kart 8 team members, please stand and be recognized.