

## Young People and the Law: Thompson Coe, Allstate Staff Counsel and Street Law Bring the Practice of Law to High School Students

**March 2014, Houston, TX** - Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons, L.L.P. partnered with Allstate Staff Counsel in Houston (G. Patrick Collins & Associates) and Street Law, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to educating diverse youth about law, democracy and human rights, to administer a week long introduction-to-law program for two sections of AP U.S. Government at John H. Reagan High School in the Houston Independent School District (HISD).

During the week the students participated in interactive classroom workshops facilitated by attorneys and paralegals from both Thompson Coe and G. Patrick Collins. The areas of law covered in the workshops were contracts, employment law and torts, which allowed the students to experience three different aspects of practicing law – a negotiation, an investigation and a mini-trial (hearing). These activities not only encouraged confidence and team-building, but helped develop other vital legal skills such as critical thinking and persuasion.

The week concluded with an all-day conference held at the Thompson Coe office, which expanded on the previously presented legal themes, and provided opportunities for the students to network with legal professionals and get a preview of real life as an attorney. As the students toured the office you could tell how impactful it was in giving them a reference point for materializing their dream, and realizing a future in the legal field was possible.

Overall the Street Law program was beneficial to everyone involved. The students had the opportunity to spend time away from their traditional curriculum to learn about the practice of law and what it means to be an attorney, and gain skills and experiences they can apply to improving their futures. The attorneys gained a lot through the experience of teaching young people about the law, and giving back to the community. One participating Thompson Coe attorney said of his experience:

*“I walked into the classroom to teach the kids about the practice of law. I walked out of the classroom feeling inspired about the future. The students were very engaging and actively debated the issues. It was refreshing to experience firsthand how the average person weighs different fact patterns. I look forward to participating in this program for many years to come.”*

