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Cyberspace back to the Classroom: Taking Lessons Learned from Teaching Street Law during the Pandemic Back to in-Person Instruction

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CYBERSPACE BACK TO THE CLASSROOM: TAKING LESSONS LEARNED FROM TEACHING STREET LAW DURING THE PANDEMIC BACK TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION*

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I. Introduction

In early spring 2020, when schools around the world were compelled to close their physical doors, educators, administrators and students were forced to re-invent what it meant to teach and to learn. For fifty years, Street Law programs have been dedicated to hands-on, student centered, interactive teaching strategies. Law students, lawyers and teachers have devoted countless hours to creating fun, practical lessons designed to teach young people about practical law that affects their daily lives and also develop the skills they need to use their newly found legal knowledge to improve their lives and their communities. Remote learning upended all the best practices

* With contributions from Şehriban İpek Aşıkoğlu, Samantha Doiron, Rachel Pollak, Betzy Portillo, Eren Sözüer, Tülay Aydın Ünver, Jasmine Ward, Laura Wesley, and Ansley Whiten.

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Street Law practitioners had spent half a century building. We had no choice but to adapt and so we did.

Law students and Street Law professors re-imagined their programs. Some practitioners immediately converted their programs to distance learning. In fall 2020, Street Law, Inc. hosted a workshop outlining early best practices for teaching a virtual Street Law program.[2] That fall, I wrote a practice report detailing the experiences of my law students teaching high school asynchronously in spring 2020 and synchronously during that summer and fall and asking whether it was possible to teach interactive Street Law lessons remotely.[3] In that article, I included the best practices that we had developed for our programs in New York City. I wanted to know if practitioners in other parts of the United States and abroad were having similar experiences and results. This paper examines comprehensive reflections from eight law school-based Street Law programs teaching remotely during the pandemic. The reflections include which suggestions worked for them in practice and which ones did not. In addition, as we look to a return to in-person instruction in the fall of 2021, this paper will examine whether there is anything we have learned from emergency remote instruction that we may want to keep. Is it possible that some of our virtual teaching experiences will strengthen our return to the classroom?

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[2] Amy Wallace, "Tips and Best Practices for Conducting a Street Law Program Online" at Street Law, Inc. (August 28, 2020).

[3] Amy Wallace, *Classroom to Cyberspace: Preserving Street Law's Interactive and Student-Centered Focus During Distance Learning*, 27(4) INT'L J. OF CLINICAL LEGAL EDUC. 83 (2020).

This paper includes: a summary of the best practices outlined in *Classroom to Cyberspace*; background on the reflections of other law school-based Street Law programs; reflections from other Street Law programs; an examination of most and least successful applied best practices as identified in the reflections; and a discussion of lessons learned from remote teaching that can be incorporated back into in-person instruction[4]. For clarity and consistency, the terms "instructors" and "facilitators" will refer to law students teaching Street Law; the term "students" will refer to high school or secondary school students participating in Street Law classes; and the term "contributors" will refer to law professors and law students who submitted reflections to be included in this paper.

II. Summary of Best Practices Outlined in Classroom to Cyberspace

The best practices outlined in *Classroom to Cyberspace* and the fall 2020 Street Law, Inc. workshop were divided into two broad categories: class structure, and class content. They are briefly summarized here.

Class Structure

Almost all virtual programs in the United States were being taught synchronously via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or a similar platform by the end of remote instruction. However, most schools were understandably unprepared for the complete physical

[4] The author would like to thank Lee Arbetman for his comments on this report.

shut down at the start of the pandemic. For some Street Law programs, like the one at New York Law School ("NYLS") and the Charter High School for Law and Social Justice ("CHSLSJ"), asynchronous instruction was the only option in spring 2020. Synchronous instruction provided greater opportunities for interactivity and assessment of student comprehension. This method was also usually more engaging and fun for students. However, asynchronous elements were helpful if community members struggled with reliable internet or other distractions at home that made live classes challenging.

Class length and "Zoom fatigue" have been frequently debated topics across all fields during the last eighteen months. I recommended that students be on screen for less than an hour – ideally around forty-five minutes. In addition, classes where students are actively engaged with the material rather than passive listeners are preferred. For the 2020 Summer Law Program at CHSLSJ, I implemented a 30/30/30 classroom framework. This schedule was thirty minutes on Zoom, thirty minutes for an independent assignment, and then thirty minutes of Zoom. When we first switched from asynchronous to synchronous we discovered that all the procedural elements of teaching virtually (breakout rooms, polls, screen sharing) were incredibly time consuming. The law student instructors frequently ran out of time. As a result, the schedule was modified for the regular fall semester at the high school to 40/30/40. That breakdown has continued for all classes at CHSLSJ and will be used for the Summer Law Program this year (2021).

I recommended smaller class sizes for virtual instruction if possible. The paper also recommended increasing the number of instructors. As the duration of remote instruction increased, our student engagement levels decreased dramatically. Teachers around the country faced similar struggles with student engagement as the pandemic extended through another academic year.[5] Having instructors in each breakout room to encourage and support students was extremely beneficial.

Finally, I recommended that instructors choose technology that was very easy to use or familiar to the students already. Remote learning was overwhelming for many students so requiring them to learn new programs and applications could have been burdensome. Many of our students struggled when required to run multiple programs simultaneously. Like most programs, we were required to use the platforms chosen by the school. This provided consistency for the high school students.

Class Content

Designing lessons that intentionally incorporated measureable means to check for understanding was listed as a critical best practice. Students were often reluctant to voluntarily participate in response to a direct question or activity. Some students were self-conscious asking for clarification in an online format. In addition, the

[5] Susan Dominus, 'I Feel Like I'm Just Drowning': Sophomore Year in a Pandemic, New York Times (May 13, 2021), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/13/magazine/high-school-students-coronavirus-pandemic.html.

overwhelming temptation to focus on off-task activities in a virtual environment existed for both adults and students. This divided focus often led to a lack of comprehension in the virtual space. The NYLS instructors asked the CHSLSJ students to explain instructions in their own words each time an independent or group activity was assigned. Although repetitive, the regular inability of students to explain the task demonstrated the importance of regularly checking for understanding before proceeding with the lesson.

In *Classroom to Cyberspace*, I also identified the best practice of planning to cover and accomplish less during a virtual session. Setting reasonable expectations for what students can process during a virtual class eliminated a great deal of stress for both the instructors and the students. Instructors did not feel that they needed to rush and students had sufficient time to engage with each topic.

I recommended that lessons continue to be interactive in a virtual space. Engaging lessons are a core component of Street Law. This trademark teaching strategy assumed even greater importance throughout the pandemic. During remote teaching, students were disconnected physically from their teachers and their peers. Students often disengaged from class entirely. It was crucial to involve them actively in each component of the class. Breakout rooms were the essential tools for most interactive lessons. Instructors used those rooms together with polls, and voting with reaction emojis to include students at each stage of a lesson.

Street Law lessons frequently incorporate current events. This was also very important during remote learning. In addition to the pandemic, the last eighteen months have seen dramatic social justice movements and fiery political conflict. Not being in a physical school deprived students of a chance to talk through these issues with their classmates. We prioritized including current events in our lessons and we saw the most passionate engagement from the students during those lessons.[6] Our students discussed the Freedom of Speech and protesting, COVID restrictions, voter identification requirements, schools banning LGBTQ books from the library, and state bans on the sale of violent video games.

Finally, I recommended using visual materials to thoughtfully engage students. During the 2020-2021 school year, NYLS instructors started each class with an image and a writing prompt. The students posted responses on screen using an interactive program. Beginning each class with a visual, pulled reluctant students into the topic of the day. The visuals were simple and the instructors did not speak while the students reflected on the image, which allowed students to process what they were seeing.

Many of the best practices outlined in *Classroom to Cyberspace* were adjusted as we continued to teach. Each class had students with their own personalities and

[6] Amy Wallace, *Counterbalancing Teen Reliance on Social Media News: The Importance of Using Street Law Methodology to Teach About Current Events*, PRAVOVA POZYTSIIA (LEGAL POSITION), ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL CLINICS OF UKRAINE (forthcoming fall 2021).

motivations. Class dynamics also changed the longer students remained in lockdown so we continued to adjust our strategies in response.

III. Reflection Questions

In January 2021, I contacted all attendees of the Street Law, Inc. fall 2020 virtual teaching workshop and asked those who were teaching Street Law virtually if they would be interested in reflecting on their remote teaching experience. I sent *Classroom to Cyberspace* to each respondent. The contributors are either law professors who lead credit-bearing law school-based Street Law programs or law student leaders of volunteer programs. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences teaching Street Law and to highlight the successes and struggles conducting their program remotely. Contributors were asked to use the following writing prompts to guide their reflection:

(a) Basics of your program (where your law students/community members teach, what they teach, are any of those things different now that they are teaching remotely);

(b) Generally, how was the experience teaching remotely?

(c) What tips, if any, were helpful? How did they help? and

(d) What best practices, if any, did not work for your program in practice? Why do you think they didn't work for your program?

Participants were told to write as little or as much as they wanted but were told their reflections would be edited for length if they exceeded the word limit.

IV. Reflections

Included below are reflections (or excepts) from Professors Eren Sözüer, Şehriban İpek Aşıkoğlu, and Tülay Aydın Ünver from Istanbul University, Professor Laura Wesley and law student instructor Betzy Portillo from Southwestern Law School, law student instructor Rachel Pollak from the University of Illinois College of Law, law student instructor Ansley Whiten from the University of Georgia School of Law, law student instructor Jasmine Ward from the University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Law, and law student instructor Samantha Doiron from St. Mary's University School of Law.

Professors Eren Sözüer, Şehriban İpek Aşıkoğlu, and Tülay Aydın Ünver

Istanbul University – Istanbul, Turkey

The Istanbul University Street Law (SL) Program is a year-long, for-credit course in which teams of law student instructors teach either consumer law or cyberlaw (mainly digital rights) at high-schools. The first part of the SL course consists of theoretical classes on these two areas of law, as well as classes on basics and objectives of SL, (interactive) teaching methods, and lesson planning. Toward the end of these classes,

instructors form teams (of four or two, depending on the number of instructors) and prepare lessons plans in accordance with their chosen topic. Law student instructors are given the opportunity to teach mock lessons in which the class and instructors act as high-school students and in the end, provide feedback to the law students. A range of fourteen to twenty-three instructors take the course, but only six instructors were enrolled this year due to reservations about teaching SL remotely. This enabled us to spend more time with the instructors, particularly to work on their lesson plans, and each team was able to teach two mock lessons.

Spring 2021 was our first experience remote-teaching SL synchronously. When schools shifted to remote teaching in Spring 2020, instructors recorded videos of their classes, which were sent to high-schools. However, we were unable to receive feedback from schools as to whether students watched these videos at all, let alone assess their effectiveness. Accordingly, we decided that synchronous remote teaching would be a better method. This year, over a course of three weeks, pairs of instructors taught three classes to 10th graders. Each class, broken into two forty-five-minute lessons and a 15-minute break, was crafted to cover the same amount of material that would normally be taught in a ninety-minute in-person class. Per the agreement with the school administration, each team was supposed to teach a group of ten students. However, actual attendance was much lower, ranging from two to six students. Although students were generally participatory, the low attendance rate made it difficult to carry out many activities and significantly demoralized the instructors.

Our main concern has been ensuring the effectiveness of the classes, which depends both on the lessons and the participation of students. Various tips from the article and SL workshop have been helpful. This year, we coupled written feedback on lesson plans with Zoom meetings to address instructor concerns and issues with lesson plans. As emphasized in the article and the workshop, we insisted on instructors to be "intentional and thoughtful" about lesson objectives and to prepare thorough lesson plans. In this process, the tip regarding online activities taking more time than in-person ones was particularly helpful. It is a difficulty we, as professors, experienced when teaching preparatory classes to law students. We had to go over lesson plans with instructors several times, sometimes up until the last minute. However, this rigorous process enabled instructors to broaden their understanding of and manage expectations for lesson outcomes remote teaching. They were able to tailor lesson plans accordingly and stick to plans in terms of content and timing. Explaining to our instructors that certain suggestions were supported by the experience of remote SL teaching was also helpful to partially dispel their worries regarding online classes.

A major concern was maintaining the attention and participation of high-school students. We took the tip to have a maximum of fifteen students on Zoom a step further and requested from the school administration to designate groups of ten. We also guided instructors in preparing participatory lessons suitable for remote teaching. Instructors used various interactive tools such as media, polls, games, emojis, and virtual backgrounds. We encouraged law student instructors to

incorporate content that would relate to high-school students, like contemporary issues such as pandemic measures affecting the youth. Students were indeed much more responsive to the combination of such methods and content. Furthermore, methods such as hypotheticals enabled students to discover legal concepts without the instructors having to explain beforehand.

As we experienced in our own teaching, using breakout rooms was particularly beneficial. Since high-school students did not have much contact with each other due to remote teaching, they first socialized in the breakout rooms and then proceeded to the assignment. As the high-school students already knew each other and were familiar with Zoom, our students had no problems using breakout rooms. Clear instructions and short tasks kept students from sitting in silence. Using breakout rooms for small groups (each room had 2 participants) allowed each student to participate. Also, we had reminded law student instructors to pay attention to the closing time of breakout rooms, which saved them time.

A particularly helpful tip was the idea that silence on Zoom is acceptable. Our instructors were inclined to move on from discussions if they did not receive a response right away. Referring to our class discussions, we reminded them that a moment of silence is not something to be avoided and that they should give students time to think after posing a question.

Finally, for instructors, we prepared a checklist consisting of tips from the workshop regarding class preparation (e.g. charging laptops, closing unnecessary applications)

and our own tips (e.g. announcements, enabling "gallery view" on Zoom). This checklist was a handy tool and helped instructors avoid unexpected technical issues during class.

We do not think there were any best practices that particularly did not work for our program. We believe that we were unable to implement some best practices due to low attendance. For instance, although there was a school teacher present in most classes, this made no difference as to the students' attendance. Furthermore, law student instructors implemented the practice of reminding the class to turn on cameras, but this did not have an effect on students that had not turned on their cameras in the first place. Instructors also implemented the tip regarding signing on early or logging off late. However, this did not work in our case as students logged in at class time and immediately logged off as the class ended. Nevertheless, instructors spared a few minutes at the beginning of class to chat, in which they incorporated facts from students' lives to bond with them. This practice was indeed helpful to connect with the students. Finally, disabling the chat function would not have worked in our case as for some students, it was their only way of participation.

Practice Report

Professor Laura Wesley

Southwestern Law School, Los Angeles, California

The Street Law Clinic at Southwestern serves high school students ranging in age from 16 to 18 years old, and many of our students are in the foster care system or on probation. We teach at schools throughout Los Angeles County, including schools on-site at residential facilities, charter schools, and continuation schools.

Our law student instructors work in pairs and are assigned to a high school to teach 10, 60-90 minute law-related classes over a semester. The purpose of the course is to help high students transition into adulthood successfully by knowing their rights. Some of the topics covered are: why we have laws, the court process and people, criminal and constitutional law, education law and careers, employment rights, housing rights, healthy relationships, and consumer rights. At the end of the semester, the high school students take a field trip to the law school and participate in a moot court activity. Each high school student leaves the program with a resource binder of local resources and legal information.

Last spring, our instructors were halfway through their teaching assignments when COVID-19 forced schools to shut down. We quickly pivoted to recorded asynchronous lessons and virtual legal binders. In the fall, five of our schools were excited to welcome our Street Law teams back into the classroom virtually, this time teaching to students live. The law student instructors used the school's platform to teach their classes, which in all cases was Zoom. This was fortunate because the

instructors and high school students were already familiar with the platform, which helped transition to virtual learning. I would note that the law student instructors spent more time on icebreakers than usual in order to build trust with the students and create a safe environment to ask questions and share opinions. They also paid special attention to validating their students' responses, which helped build students' confidence and made them feel comfortable sharing in a virtual environment.

Virtual learning also required class time to be adjusted. Although time varied, no classes exceed 60 minutes. Zoom fatigue is real, and we wanted to respect the time limits provided by the school. Video cameras were another issue we experienced while teaching virtually. The majority of students did not turn on their cameras. We learned many schools had a policy that allowed for cameras to be disabled. This was to protect students who might have crowded living conditions or be embarrassed about their surroundings. Despite the challenges of the cameras, many of the students actively participated by unmuting themselves or participating in the chat. This allowed students to participate in a way they felt most comfortable.

For engagement, we used breakout rooms, polls, chats, Google slide decks, Kahoot and Jamboards. We quickly learned the key to breakout rooms was to have a facilitator in each room to start the conversation or provide slide deck prompts for each room to use. The slide deck allowed the Street Law facilitators to see the responses in real-time. The chat feature was also helpful to check for student understanding. The law

students also often used Kahoot to debrief a topic. The high school students enjoyed the competition aspect of Kahoot. We also found Google Jamboards to be especially helpful in getting students to respond to true/false questions, or hypotheticals involving a thumbs up/ down, fair/unfair, agree/disagree activities. The Jamboards provided a way to further probe as to why students felt one way or another. Polling was useful but required questions to be sent ahead of time to the classroom teacher, which wasn't always practical.

Another best practice our law student instructors followed was to have simple, measurable objectives and build in time to transition from one activity to another. Other helpful tips were the use of images, colorful slide decks, and short videos.

Overall the transition to virtual learning was challenging but doable! Any challenges were outweighed by the active learning taking place by the students.

Betzy Portillo

Southwestern Law School, Los Angeles, California

As a law school student who strongly believes that students living in low-income communities lack educational resources and support, I had a strong desire to participate in the Street Law Clinic at Southwestern Law School. I remember attending a Legal Clinic informational session in April 2020 and asking "Will the Street Law

Clinic be feasible virtually if students are not able to return to the classroom?" A few months have passed since I had the opportunity to virtually teach students at Los Angeles Promise High School in Los Angeles, California and I am glad I did.

My partner and I taught a virtual classroom of students at LA Promise High School from September 2020 to December 2020. The ten weeks consisted of weekly lesson plans including what is the law, the legal system, criminal law, constitutional law, education, employment, housing, consumer law, health/healthy relationships, and the last class celebration. Our virtual teaching was done using the Zoom platform and our virtual classroom consisted of twenty-two students. Covid-19 forced students to learn from their homes, so it was no surprise to us that most students did not attend class with their video camera turned on. Therefore, we met students where they are and embraced the idea of teaching to a classroom of black squares.

Virtual teaching is more difficult than teaching inside a physical classroom because instructors are unable to grasp from students' faces whether they are understanding the material or not. Additionally, students who do not comprehend the information or simply have a lot going on at home can hide behind a black screen. Therefore, virtual teaching demands a heightened level of engaging students so that students can remain focused and feel encouraged to participate. To best engage students, we used platforms that the students' teacher was already using with them like Google Jamboard and Kahoot. Using the same platforms ensured that students would already be familiar with how to use them and helped avoid any technical difficulties that could

cause delays in the lessons. We also encouraged students to participate in any method that they could, whether that was virtually raising their hands and unmuting themselves or writing it in the chat box in the case that they could not unmute themself or felt uncomfortable doing so. As an incentive and to bring students some joy during these hard times, we rewarded a few students in every class for their participation with an electronic gift card.

Because virtual teaching makes it hard to assess what lessons students enjoyed the most or what facts resonated with them, we asked the students to jot down their thoughts using Google Jamboard. As Street Law Clinic instructors, our goal was to make a positive impact during these unprecedented times and based on the Google Jamboard responses and their high level of participation throughout the ten weeks, I am happy to say that we did.

Jasmine Ward

University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law, Kansas City, Missouri

In November 2020, the Black Law Students' Association ("BLSA") of the University of Missouri – Kansas City ("UMKC Law") hosted a virtual Street Law session with Schlage High School (Kansas City, Kansas). This was the second time BLSA hosted Street Law and the first time we hosted the event virtually.

Our first session was hosted in November 2019. BLSA law student instructors, local Black attorneys, and Black UMKC Law professors taught Street Law courses over the span of a few hours. We hosted the sessions in our law school and were able to welcome over 70 high school students. The instructors and high school students enjoyed the sessions so much that BLSA immediately started thinking about hosting a second session – we had no idea that a global pandemic would make in-person sessions impossible.

During the summer months of 2020, BLSA reached out to a few schools and organizations who had expressed interest in the in-person Street Law sessions. Schlagle High School was sure they would still be able to find students interested in participating virtually. This was exciting – but BLSA didn't yet know what a virtual Street Law session would look like.

Even in November 2019, BLSA offered Street Law a bit differently than other schools. Instead of offering a full summer session, we offered about three hours of programming. We split students into different groups and taught each group four different lessons; to achieve this, we rotated each group to different classrooms where specific instructors and lessons awaited them.

Eventually, the working idea for November 2020 was to imitate the November 2019 structure with Zoom breakout rooms.

. . .

We feared the students would not be engaged or enjoy the sessions. Those fears were for naught – the students were so excited to begin, were eager to get back into sessions Zoom had kicked them out of, and profusely expressed their love of the sessions when all was said and done. They seemed to enjoy connecting to people closer to their age, who looked like them, and who were telling them information that could immediately help them if needed. The school itself asked if we could host them again during the Spring semester. Again, our instructors enjoyed the sessions – there's something special about remembering that legal concepts which seem so obvious are *not* obvious to our communities, however practical and important they prove to be. Further, our instructors see Street Law sessions as opportunities to do for others what was done for them – model happy, helpful people of color in fields we aren't typically portrayed as occupying. Personally, it was refreshing and exciting to be with students who were so eager to learn and so excited about who they could become. Knowing they enjoyed the sessions and connected to our instructors helps me remember that these sessions aren't theoretical to them – teenagers don't act excited or say they enjoy something unless they mean it. It makes us all so happy to know they enjoy these sessions and really learn from them.

BLSA is excited to host another session soon. While our virtual session was successful, we hope to be in person next year!

Practice Report

Ansley Whiten

University of Georgia School of Law, Athens, Georgia

This year is the first year that the Street Law Program has been in place at the University of Georgia School of Law. With that being said, we don't have an in-person experience to compare the remote Fall semester to, but we were still able to see where differences would be between the two. Our law student instructors remotely taught middle and high school students that were either volunteers for the juvenile offender diversionary program Peer Court, or first-time offenders who chose or received attending a Street Law session in their disposition. They taught various lessons from the Street Law curriculum, but the students' favorites were the First Amendment Rights and Introduction to the Juvenile Justice System.

In general, teaching remotely was a positive experience for both the law student instructors and the students, with a few challenges, as expected. We found that it was easier for some of the students to attend because it was virtual because they did not have to find a ride to an in-person location. Because of this, even when everything returns to normal, we will probably also offer virtual sessions. One helpful tip from the "Best Practices" session was to give breaks during the sessions. It is much more difficult to keep people attentive via Zoom, especially after being on Zoom all day with school, so we found it helpful to give a 10 minute break for every 30 minutes of instruction. We also found it necessary, if possible, to have the students keep their cameras on. If they were allowed to turn them off, participation dropped drastically.

We also found it helpful to offer sessions during the week and on the weekends, to offer the students more flexibility if they were feeling fatigued after school. We have to offer our sessions outside of school hours since it is associated with an extra-curricular activity. We also found that it was useful to substitute Google Docs for paper handouts so that the students could still write their ideas out when we were doing handouts or discussions. One of the tips in the video was to turn off the chat function, but we found that chat was helpful for the more shy participants or ones having connectivity issues so that they could still participate without having to speak in front of everyone.

When we had a big enough group of students, breakout rooms were very useful and allowed the instructors to interact more directly with the students and increased big group participation because the students had a chance to brainstorm and organize their ideas with their peers before presenting them to the big group.

Rachel Pollak

University of Illinois College of Law, Champaign, Illinois

At the University of Illinois College of Law, the Education Law and Policy Society started Street Law programming in the Fall of 2020. Though members of the law

student organization had been planning to begin work with Street Law for some time, this was the semester we got the initiative up and running.

To kick off our program, we partnered with a small, relatively new high school in Urbana, Illinois. We spent three class periods over three days teaching a lesson about the first amendment and the freedom of speech. These classes were taught remotely over Zoom, by three of our law student instructors. We worked closely with the social studies teacher to determine the appropriate level of content and edited the lesson (provided by Street Law, Inc.), to fit the curriculum and match the students' needs and interests.

As an organization running a brand-new Street Law program, this has been our only experience teaching Street Law so far. Part of what made our first time teaching so successful was the workshop held for Street Law, Inc., in August of 2020. At that workshop, we were able to get a really cohesive idea of what a lesson should look like, how lessons should be facilitated, and how students might participate (through polls, the raise hand function, chat box) on Zoom and generally in a remote setting. We were even able to adapt part of the example lesson from the workshop for our own first Street Law lesson.

One best practice that did not work in our experience was utilizing both synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods for our lessons. However, our inability to make this practice a reality was due only to the structure and format of the social studies class in which we taught. Their schedule was tight and class blocks were short, so

breaks and times to provide asynchronous material were hard to come by. However, we will certainly be using this technique in the future when we can. Another difficulty we encountered was presented by the pandemic – while some of the students participating in our classes were online at home on Zoom, about half the class was learning at school in person, but participating in our lesson on Zoom as a group. While in fact every student was participating online, it was challenging to ensure that the students participating alone at home were as engaged and involved as the students participating in a group with their teacher at school. Our Street Law team looks forward to navigating those challenges—and to learning more tips and best practices from workshops like the one held on August 28, 2020—as we move forward in our Street Law programming.

Samantha Doiron

St. Mary's University School of Law, San Antonio, Texas

The Juvenile Jurisprudence Association at St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio, Texas is not traditionally a Street Law program. JJA is a teen peer court program, which works closely with underserved high schools within the San Antonio community to encourage reformative justice, provide mentorship, and adjudicate cases with the goal of closing the inequity gap for teenaged defendants. When the campus and local public schools closed because of the pandemic, JJA temporarily lost the ability to run the peer court model, but wanted to continue working with students

from local schools. Street Law came to the Board's attention as an alternative that could work well in a remote setting.

JJA implemented Street Law and taught lessons about reformative justice, the inner workings of the court process, constitutional rights, and voting rights. The semester culminated in a mock trial where students put their knowledge to work in adjudicating a case. Teaching Street Law remotely worked well for our new remote model. The one difficulty we faced was attendance, though this hurdle seemed more a reflection of the pandemic than the program itself. With students doing all of their schoolwork remotely, additional screen time each week was understandably daunting for a lot of our usual participants. Further, while schools did provide some access to technology for their students, the district JJA works most closely with is severely underfunded and the Board is unsure how many JJA students had consistent access to the internet. However, we did have enough interest that the program continued; the Board agreed that as long as even one student showed up, we would not discontinue their access to Street Law.

The model JJA used for Street Law consisted of a lecture on the topic for the week, followed by Street Law activities and discussion about the students' position on issues before and after the lecture. During these activities, we found that the students seemed more intimidated or less willing to open up about their opinions on Zoom, but if a Board member or law student instructor offered an opinion first, the conversation would start flowing with student participation. We also took time each session to

check in on mock trial preparation. Where we lacked high school students, first year law students stepped in to fill out groups and to help facilitate discussion. Street Law suggested using asynchronous classes in conjunction with synchronous, but our Board did not implement this during our Street Law year. Because last year was the first year JJA used Street Law, it was difficult to put together asynchronous sessions where we were a bit unsure of how the program as a whole would work with our traditional model.

Implementing Street Law remotely was successful for our school. We were able to use materials on the Street Law website to plan and execute an entire semester's-worth of lessons and activities for our students. In our traditional model, we touch on some of the subjects we were able to cover with Street Law, but not in such an in-depth way. Although the primary purpose of JJA is to facilitate the local teen peer court, the Street Law model highlighted the importance of legal education for the students we work with. As a new Board takes over for the next school year, the current JJA President stresses the importance of Street Law and hopes that JJA will continue using Street Law lessons and methodology with our students.

V. How Did it Work in Practice?

The feedback from other Street Law programs was helpful to identify what strategies were effective globally compared with tactics that worked for our specific program. Best practices are always evolving and that was especially true here. We continued to

refine our techniques for engaging our students as they grew less and less participatory during online instruction.

Most of the reflections identified similar experiences to ours as outlined in *Classroom to Cyberspace*. Many programs started asynchronously in spring 2020 and were able to move to synchronous instruction when schools were able to make technology more available to their students. One of my suggestions was to include asynchronous elements such as posting short videos or articles since remote schedules often meant instructors saw their students less frequently. Contributors noted that they were not able to include this complement to synchronous teaching. Once NYLS instructors began teaching synchronously, they were not able to include these either. As identified in some of the reflections, producing and preparing to teach synchronous lessons was time consuming and law student instructors, who were also managing their own virtual learning, did not have time or energy for additional projects.

Either intentionally or due to low attendance, programs proceeded with smaller classes during remote instruction. Smaller classes worked well for the NYLS instructors and it enabled other programs to provide students with more individualized attention which is generally lacking in remote teaching. Unfortunately one program reported that despite thoughtful advance planning and fun interactive lessons focusing on current events (very similar to the ones identified as successful by other programs), student attendance was so low that the program could not proceed. We are about to start our second summer teaching a remote Summer Law Program at

CHSLSJ and although I want classes small enough that the students feel comfortable participating, I am worried about online burnout keeping many students from attending.

Most programs incorporated the idea of including more instructors in their virtual teaching. This was without question the most important element of a successful NYLS program. The students were far more participatory in small breakout rooms guided by a law student than they were in the main Zoom. In addition, synchronous instruction requires so many tasks to happen simultaneously while attending to the needs of the students that I am in awe of teachers who have been handling class on their own during this crisis.

Initially NYLS instructors only used applications and programs that were absolutely necessary to teach the lesson. As student and instructor comfort levels increased, the instructors introduced new programs but only after vetting them for accessibility by the students. Contributors identified a number of different programs that aided them in delivering fun interactive lessons, including Jamboard[7] and Kahoot[8]. By spring 2021, NYLS instructors started each class with a question on Padlet[9]. The students responded well to posting their responses to the prompt each week.

Intentionally checking for student understanding was identified by most of the contributors as an essential component of lesson preparation and execution. The

[7] https://workspace.google.com/products/jamboard/.
[8] https://kahoot.com/.
[9] https://padlet.com/.

reflections echoed the experiences of the NYLS law student instructors. Students were often distracted or unwilling to contribute so planning multiple varied strategies for measuring student comprehension was key to a successful lesson.

Most contributors noted that they were able to cover less material during a virtual session and many were happy to have received that tip prior to starting their program. Last summer NYLS instructors were very discouraged because they failed to complete their lessons. Having that information heading into the fall alleviated stress for the Street Law instructors and the students.

Some programs continued to teach the same topics as before the pandemic and that continuity worked for both the instructors and their partner secondary or high schools. Some programs chose to modify their curriculum to address current events of interest to their students. Programs on both paths found success with their lessons.

All programs worked hard to incorporate Street Law's hallmark interactive activities into their virtual programs. Breakout rooms were key to everyone's success this past year. Some programs chose to incorporate polls and in-program interactive elements while others relied on traditional group work and hypotheticals. In *Classroom to Cyberspace*, I suggested disabling the chat function because we noticed when chat was available, students would rely on it exclusively instead of participating verbally. Some programs identified the chat function as essential as the only means available for some students to communicate. NYLS instructors also noticed that students regularly had microphone issues or simply could not motivate themselves to unmute and

contribute. By the end of the spring 2021 semester, we regularly allowed students to respond in the chat though we did notice that once we allowed the chat function, more and more students only responded that way.

VI. Lessons to Take Back into the Classroom

For many law school-based live-client clinical programs, the move online enabled them to broaden their reach and assist more clients. Most professors I have spoken with plan to continue to offer services remotely, some online only and some in conjunction with in-person clinical work.[10] In contrast, all the Street Law contributors plan to return to in-person instruction as soon as possible. One program that operates as an after-school opportunity, reported that remote classes helped accommodate busy high school student schedules and eliminated the need for transportation. They plan to continue to offer some classes remotely. The NYLS program will return to in-person classes in fall 2021 and both the instructors and the students are thrilled. As difficult as remote teaching was for both students and instructors, it gave us a new lens to examine our Street Law work. Some elements incorporated to address the challenges of virtual instruction may strengthen in-person teaching as well.

[10] "Clinical and Public Legal Education: Responses to Coronavirus," at Turning Challenges in Opportunities: Justice Education in Times of Crises, hosted by the Global Alliance for Justice Education, International Journal of Clinical Legal Education, and Association for Canadian Clinical Legal Education, virtually at Northumbia University, Newcastle, U.K. (June 16-18, 2021).

Restricted remote schedules forced us to choose the most important lessons to teach our students. The CHSLSJ Summer Law Program curriculum has been cut in half to accommodate remote instruction. This is an opportunity to evaluate what is most important to and relevant for our students. We should take this thoughtfulness into the fall semester and be just as selective even though we will return to our regular class schedule.

Active learning is always preferred over passive. However, students responded well to short videos (under five minutes) explaining complicated topics. Use of media as a complement to an engaging Street Law lesson could fortify student learning in the fall. Some in-person classes may have access to technology in their classrooms. For those programs, continuing to incorporate fun interactive technology (Kahoot, Jamboard) may be an effective strategy to review other components of a Street Law lesson.

Virtual platforms enabled more guests to visit classes and contribute to lessons. Increased student engagement demonstrated the benefit of including community members in class. Even if they can only join classes virtually, we should encourage greater involvement of community members going forward. Community members can be especially impactful when addressing current events and political movements.

There is always a tension between reaching more students versus giving a smaller number of students more personalized attention. Class sizes were often smaller for remote Street Law programs. A return to in-person instruction will likely mean a return to pre-COVID class sizes. Classes should incorporate opportunities for

individualized one-on-one student/law student interaction in order to foster community and mentoring. As NYLS returns to in-person instruction in fall 2021, we are fortunate to have two former Street Law instructors as teaching assistants for our Street Law program. We are hoping the teaching assistants will enable the instructors to spend more time with each student.

It was critical to regularly check for student understanding over the past year. Although that technique has always been a fundamental component of a Street Law lesson, it has been more intentional during remote learning. Hopefully the high school students will not be as distracted or disengaged when we return to in-person classes, but ensuring that each student understands each part of the lesson will be equally important.

At NYLS, before going into the classroom the law students spend weeks in seminar focusing on teaching methodology, classroom management strategies, and learning about the students and community where we teach. We discuss the importance of respect, compassion, and empathy for our students as teenagers learning in underserved communities. Most programs include similar discussions in their Street Law programs. During the pandemic, the law student instructors witnessed the severe economic and technological disparities present in our city. This enabled them to instantly understand the inequities faced by their students. These challenges were always there, but were not always apparent to law student instructors teaching in-person. The high school students routinely had internet issues which prevented the

camera or microphone from working properly. Some students lost their connection to the Zoom multiple times each class, only to return and ask what they missed. Students unmuted and the background noise made it impossible to hear them because they share space with a large number of family members. Despite the difficulties of teaching remotely, the law student instructors remained outwardly enthusiastic, patient, and encouraging because they understood their students were struggling.[11] As we return to in-person teaching, the challenges may be less obvious but will not be less real and it is critical that the law students develop the same compassion and understanding as they did this year.

[11] Thank you to my spring 2021 NYLS Street Law instructors: Kristen Bulka; Saher Chaudhary; Emily Devlin; Cheyenne Matus; Filomena Stabile; Tabetha Tufariello; Alan Vaitzman; Kassy Vazquez; and Serena Zachariah. Thank you also to my summer 2021 NYLS Street Law Summer Law Program instructors: Caitriona Carey; Olivia Faljean; Daniel Glicker; Catherine Gumarin; Julia Ismail; and Rishai McDermott.