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## Attorneys take skills to the classroom CBA takes control of program aimed at bringing civics lessons to CPS

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A long-standing program that places lawyers in elementary and middle school classrooms found a new home in The Chicago Bar Association.

The Edward J. Lewis II Lawyers in the Classroom Program has transitioned to The Chicago Bar Association's Television Productions Inc., from the now-defunct Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago.

CBA President Jesse H. Ruiz announced the move on Nov. 26.

"With having access to more resources in The Chicago Bar Association, we'll be able to reach more students," said Tiffani Watson, director of the classroom program. "It's just a phenomenal partnership."

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, a nonprofit founded in 1974, closed on Oct. 31.

"We are excited for the opportunity for this critically important program to continue and grow at The Chicago Bar Association, as the [a]ssociation shares the mission and vision of Edward J. Lewis II Lawyers in the Classroom Program and understands how it positively impacts students.

"It will be another



**Winston & Strawn LLP partner Samuel Mendenhall (center, in tie) with students from Perspectives Charter School on the city's South Side at his law office during a mock trial.** The Chicago Bar Association photo

rewarding and impactful program for the CBA to use as a means to educate Chicago's youth and strengthen their knowledge of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and their overall rights under the law," said Andrew W. Vail, former CRFC board chair and partner at Jenner & Block LLP.

"CRFC recognized that it faced a difficult economic environment, like many not-for-profit organizations, and identified an opportunity for its core programs to continue and grow at leading legal insti-

tutions, like the Edward J. Lewis II Lawyers in the Classroom Program at The Chicago Bar Association."

Watson said the new partnership with the CBA could allow the program to expand to high schools.

"Taking this to the high school level would be the next step," she said. "I think with the resources with CBA that is the exact direction we'd be going as we continue to expand."

More than 600 attorneys from 40 Chicago law firms have volunteered in the program, including Chicago attorneys Allison N. Glover,

Benjamin T. Kurtz and Samuel Mendenhall.

Glover, a litigation counsel at Jenner & Block and Chicago Public Schools alumna, said she volunteers with the program so "CPS students can see themselves through my example."

"Maybe they won't become lawyers but if they meet someone with a similar background, they may consider it as an option for themselves. I also love the conversations and debate that go on during our lessons. I can literally see them developing their

critical thinking skills. It brightens my day whenever I'm with these students," Glover said.

Kurtz, a partner at Kirkland & Ellis, was introduced to the classroom program while a summer intern at Kirkland & Ellis in 2007 and has been volunteering ever since.

"The Lawyers in the Classroom Program enables lawyers to connect with students and encourage them to think critically about civic participation and justice," Kurtz said. "The law becomes accessible and students feel empowered to engage civically, or per-

haps even consider a career in law. The students' insight and creativity are contagious and attorney volunteers leave energized to return again for future sessions."

Mendenhall, a partner at Winston & Strawn LLP and a Chicago public school alumnus, has participated

since 2013.

"This program is extremely important to me and the legal community. For most of the students it is their first exposure to the law and I am the first lawyer they ever met. I became involved in the program as a way to give back."