

ANTOINETTE GIFFORD

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Dynamic and results-driven Criminal Justice and Social Studies educator with international experience and a strong background in curriculum alignment, secondary legal instruction, and youth advocacy. Licensed in Social Studies and Law Enforcement, with proven success in coordinating interdisciplinary legal education initiatives and community outreach. Recognized for impactful contributions to public education, college concurrent enrollment, and student-centered experiential learning.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cherry Creek School District, Denver, Colorado 2015 - Present

Senior Adjunct Instructor, Community College of Aurora – Criminal Justice & Law Program

- Created and aligned criminal justice and law curriculum with Career and Technical Education and Colorado Academic Standards
- Led implementation of Colorado Courts in the Community – Colorado Court of Appeals *Civil and Criminal Oral Arguments* and Colorado Supreme Court *Mock Judicial Commission*
- Created various experiential learning exercises to facilitate high level of learning.
- Taught secondary law courses designed for concurrent enrollment credit with Arapahoe Community College and Community College of Aurora
- Implemented annual fall Judicial Symposium and annual spring student-facilitated law-related symposium
- Assisted in the interview and selection process of new teachers and administrators
- Facilitated cross-disciplinary professional development to support district-wide literacy strategies

EDUCATION

Juris Doctor - University of Denver College of Law, Denver, Colorado

B.A. in Sociology/Criminal Justice - Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana

LICENSES

- Colorado Professional Teacher License (Social Studies Endorsement) 2009 - 2026
- Career Technical Education License (Law Enforcement Endorsement) 2015 – 2026

AWARDS & HONORS

- Incomparable Achievements Teacher Advocacy Award
- National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship – CSU Dominguez
- American Bar Association Public Education Fellowship – Thurgood Marshall Federal Judicial Center & Supreme Court
- Supreme Court Summer Institute Fellowship – Supreme Court Historical Society
- Community College of Aurora Instructor Spotlight – Recognition for concurrent enrollment Legal Field Education Excellence

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

Commissioner of Judicial Performance – Denver County Court Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission

Board Member – Learn Your Rights in the Community – Colorado - Youth Legal Education

Court Appointed Special Advocate – Arapahoe County, Colorado - Child Advocacy & Court Reporting

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated – Aurora, Colorado - Chairperson of the Strategic Planning Committee, Social Justice Committee, Ivy Leaf Reporter and Scholarship Committee



MRS. ANTOINETTE GIFFORD

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW PROGRAM (CJLP)

OVERLAND HIGH SCHOOL

CHERRY CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT

2024- 2025

SUMMARY OF LAW-RELATED ACTIVITIES

CJLP students at Colorado Supreme Court with Colorado Court of Appeals' Judge Moultrie for Q&A discussion regarding judicial function and process.



LEARN YOUR RIGHTS IN COMMUNITY (LYRIC)

CJLP students learn about the United States Constitution, focusing on the 4th, 5th and 6th Amendments by reading relevant cases. The academic foundation was brought to life through an interactive session with volunteer attorneys Stephanie Wise and Haydn Collard from Learn Your Rights in the Community (LYRIC). During the sessions, Attorney Wise and Attorney Collard presented scenarios and guided students in practicing how to safely and confidently assert their constitutional rights.

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION



CJLP students had a fruitful guest session with the Colorado Probation Department learning their role of public safety within our community. Students learned the various data points regarding those on probation throughout the state, the various divisions within the department as well as the opportunities for internships as future college students. Probation Officers Stacy Allen, Anna Reyes & Janira Pacheco was very insightful sharing the current trends and reforms within the department. Students had a productive learning experience.



JUDICIAL SYMPOSIUM: FIRST AMENDMENT

CJLP hosted another outstanding Judicial Symposium welcoming approximately 250 students from across Cherry Creek School District. Panelist engaged students in a First Amendment presentation and their personal career journeys. There were two microphones in the audience to allow for robust student engagement. Expert panelist and support included - Judge Espinosa, Judge Dorancy, Presiding Judge Hickman, Attorney O'Connell and Attorney Mancero.

>>> CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW PROGRAM

DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (DEA)

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) actively engaged with CJLP students to educate them about the dangers of fentanyl and the broader opioid crisis. During the visit, DEA Special Agents James Stroop and Miguel Chino not only provided critical information on drug prevention but also shared their personal career journeys into law enforcement, offering insight into the education required, training, dedication, and passion to become a special agent and how to maintain a successful career.



>>> COURTROOM OBSERVATIONS

This year at the Lindsey Flanigan Courthouse, in Denver County Court, CJLP students observed Judge Martinez-Thomas' docket, one student reflected...

"The girl underage-drinking and driving facing the DUI charge struck me how just a few years and life choices can make such a big difference. We were both in the same room under completely different circumstances. Seeing real cases unfold in real time emphasized the human impact of the law. It is easy to read about legal principles in textbooks, but witnessing how they apply to people's lives made everything feel more real and consequential." - CJLP Scholar

Overall, CJLP students had an amazing day bridging their academic knowledge with experiential learning.

AURORA POLICE DEPARTMENT (APD) <<<

CJLP students hosted the annual Spring Symposium, focusing this year on *Criminal Justice: Mental Health*. The event featured guest speakers from the Aurora Police Department expert Crisis Team—Sergeant Buchholz and Clinical Social Worker Clinician Jennifer Fierberg from U.C. Health—who shared insights into mental health crisis response. CJLP students opened the program by presenting the historical context of deinstitutionalization, its societal impacts, and relevant case law, along with discussions on local policy initiatives and recent reforms. The symposium further displayed the importance of the social work and law enforcement partnership to public safety in our communities.



>>> UNIVERSITY OF DENVER - STURM COLLEGE OF LAW (DU)

CJLP student leadership team attended the University of Denver Sturm College of Law - where they participated in:

- Mock Evidence Class taught by Professor Webb
- Tour of DU Law campus
- Q & A with DU Law Student Panel
- Mock Debate

Students reflected on the opportunity as interactive in the mock class and so inspiring to hear from current 1L, 2L & 3L students. Students enjoyed the opportunity to debate over current social media mediums and engage in a law class.



➤➤➤ CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW PROGRAM

COLORADO MOCK JUDICIAL COMMISSION SELECTION

CJLP students participated in the Colorado Courts Mock Judicial Commission gaining a unique, hands-on experience in the judicial process by stepping into the roles of commissioners, evaluating candidates, and conducting mock interviews. This immersive event was further elevated by the involvement of two prominent judges—Colorado Supreme Court Justice Gabriel and Colorado Court of Appeals Chief Judge Bernard (retired)—who offered valuable insights into judicial ethics, qualifications, and the importance of impartiality. Their presence inspired students to engage deeply with what they learned in class and the principles of the judiciary.



➤➤➤ DISTRICT ATTORNEY VICTIM SERVICES UNIT

CJLP students recently had the valuable opportunity to give presentations to Ms. Sunni Ward, the Victim Services Coordinator from the 17th Judicial District Attorney's Office. During the session, students presented their understanding of victimology theories, justice system processes, and support services through research projects. Ms. Sunni Ward offered insightful feedback and shared real-world experiences, helping bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice.

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM <<<

CJLP students hosted a Juvenile Justice Symposium featuring expert Attorney Azura Taslimi. The event began with student-led presentations that provided a historical overview of the juvenile justice system, highlighting relevant U.S. Supreme Court cases that have shaped juvenile rights and sentencing practices. Their insights set the stage for a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. A highlight of the symposium was a mini mock debate, where students engaged in thoughtful discussion of juvenile justice, demonstrating both their research and public speaking skills.



➤➤➤ THE SUN DOES SHINE WITH AUTHOR ANTHONY RAY HINTON - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

CJLP students had the powerful opportunity to meet with author Mr. Anthony Ray Hinton, whose story of wrongful incarceration and eventual release after nearly 30 years on death row has inspired people around the world. During his visit at the University of Colorado Boulder, Mr. Hinton spoke candidly about his experiences, the failures of the justice system, and the importance of hope, resilience, and forgiveness. His words resonated deeply with CJLP students, as all students had read the book in our class. CJLP students witnessed the power of storytelling. At the end of the event, CJLP students had a private meet and greet with Mr. Hinton that was very powerful!



EDGEWATER MUNICIPAL COURT
1800 HARLAN ST.
EDGEWATER, CO 80214
ghickman@edgewaterco.com

Office of the Presiding Judge

May 5, 2025

American Lawyers Alliance
Margarent Settle
Teacher of the Year Award Chair

Ms. Settle:

It is my distinct pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Antoinette Gifford, an exceptional educator and advocate for experiential learning in the field of criminal justice and law for the American Lawyers Alliance Teacher of the Year Award.

As a member and past chairperson of the Cherry Creek School District's Criminal Justice and Law Program Advisory Board, I have had the privilege of witnessing Ms. Gifford's extraordinary talent as an educator. Her dynamic and engaging instruction consistently captivates students and motivates many to pursue careers in criminal justice. What sets Ms. Gifford apart is her strategic collaboration with judges, attorneys, probation officers, and law enforcement professionals—partnerships that not only enrich classroom instruction but also make the justice system tangible and relatable for students. Her unmatched dedication to bridging education and professional opportunity exemplifies the kind of innovation and impact this award seeks to recognize.

Ms. Gifford has significantly deepened her students' understanding of the courts, law enforcement, and the legal profession. Through thoughtfully organized experiences—such as guest speaker events, field trips to courts, forensic labs, and detention centers, as well as hosting Judicial Symposia and on-site oral arguments by the Colorado Court of Appeals—she connects classroom learning with real-world legal practice. These immersive opportunities provide students with a meaningful, practical perspective on how the justice system operates within a democratic society.

Further, Ms. Gifford's curriculum is as intellectually rich as it is socially conscious. Ms. Gifford introduces her students to powerful texts such as *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson and *The Sun Does Shine* by Anthony Ray Hinton, which spark critical dialogue around wrongful convictions

and the human impact of the justice system. These classroom discussions inspired her students to host a Death Penalty Symposium, demonstrating her ability to cultivate leadership, empathy, and informed civic participation.

A cornerstone of Ms. Gifford's teaching philosophy is her unwavering commitment to equity and constitutional literacy. She empowers students to understand both their rights and responsibilities as active citizens. Through partnerships with organizations such as Learn Your Rights in the Community (LYRIC), Ms. Gifford ensures that her students gain a meaningful understanding of their constitutional protections. This work fosters not only knowledge, but also student agency, confidence, and civic voice.

Ms. Gifford demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to civic learning, legal education, and empowering young people. She embodies the ideal of preparing students for informed, engaged participation in a democratic society—regularly involving them in discussions of current legal issues that ignite their passion and critical thinking. More than just an educator, Ms. Gifford is a visionary leader, a dedicated advocate for justice, and a vital connector between the classroom, the legal system, and the broader community. I wholeheartedly and enthusiastically nominate Ms. Gifford for the American Lawyers Alliance Teacher of the Year Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to law-related education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gina Edwards-Hickman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gina Edwards-Hickman
Presiding Judge
City of Edgewater



May 5, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of Mrs. Antoinette Gifford, who has been nominated for the American Lawyers Alliance Teacher of the Year Award. I have known Antoinette since I began working at Overland High School in 2017. Antoinette is an integral part of our school programming as a Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement CTE (Career and Technical Education) teacher and leader in our community.

In her specialized classes, Antoinette has demonstrated an incredible amount of advanced content knowledge from her time in the law profession, is a diligent and thoughtful partner for her students and families and is always seeking opportunities for our students to gain real-life experiences. She has organized courtroom visits, allowing students to gain firsthand insight into the judicial system. Additionally, she hosted a juvenile justice symposium, which provided a platform for students to engage with experts and discuss important issues related to youth and the law. Antoinette always works to provide the most dynamic educational experience possible for her students. She empowers her students to be leaders within her classes, the school, and in the community.

Having observed her teaching, Antoinette plans all of her lessons with a student-centered approach, engaging them in the most up-to-date Colorado and national law procedures and practices. Her involvement in a mock judicial selection program was particularly impactful, as it gave students the opportunity to understand the complexities of judicial appointments and the importance of fair and impartial decision-making. Furthermore, Antoinette's students have had the privilege of presenting their findings and projects to the District Attorney's office, showcasing their hard work and dedication.

Antoinette's instructional leadership and collaboration highlights that she is always prepared well in advance, is considerate of different learning needs, and seeks to build a classroom atmosphere that is inclusive and equitable for all students as they learn about our criminal justice system.

We are so grateful to have Antoinette as a teacher at Overland High School, and because of her proven and consistent commitment to creating and supporting a dynamic learning environment for her students, I am confident that she is more than deserving of this award. Please feel free to call me at 720-747-3881 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Sybil Booker

Sybil Booker, Principal



Ms. Antoinette Gifford, JD

Criminal Justice Instructor



Ms. Gifford has been with Cherry Creek Schools since 2015. She has taught for more than 15 years including secondary social studies and has international teaching experience in Taiwan and Israel. Her externship experience with the Colorado State Public Defender-Juvenile Division fuels her teaching and advocacy for education, justice, and the law. She feels purposeful proactively teaching students about the law. As an affiliate instructor with Community College of Aurora's Criminal Justice Department, Mrs. Gifford is right at home teaching to a diverse student body within Cherry Creek School District.

Criminal Justice Liaisons

Bridging the gap between
classroom and communities



Aurora Police Department

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition

Colorado Courts

Denver Sheriff Department

Guardian ad Litem – Child Advocate Attorney

Student Resource Officers

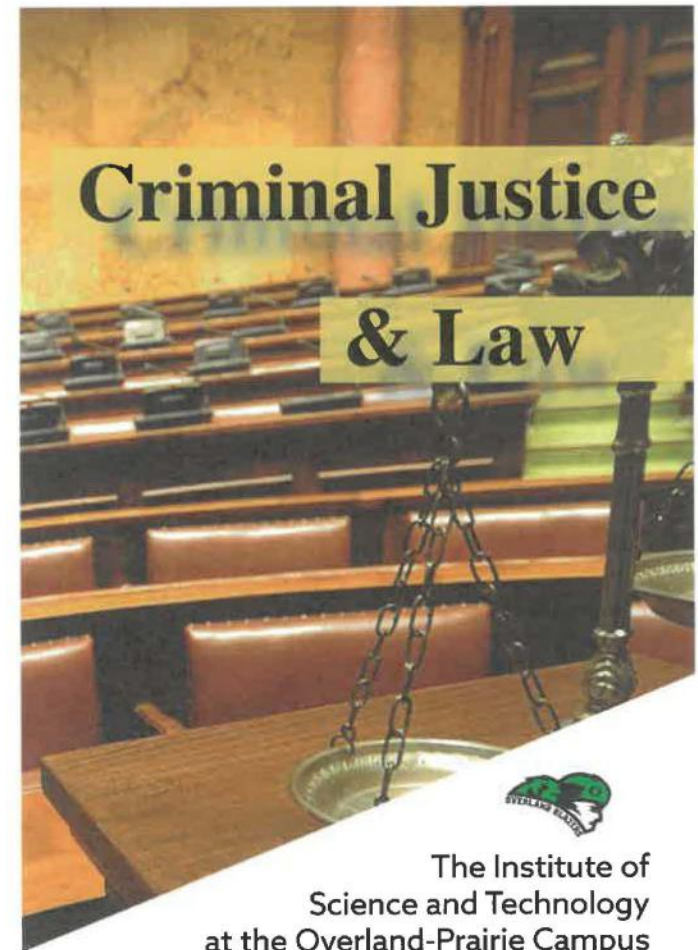
Colorado Bureau of Investigations

Second Chance Center

Department of Probation

Office of the Medical Examiner

Learn Your Rights in Community



The Institute of
Science and Technology
at the Overland-Prairie Campus



"Education is the most
powerful weapon you can
use to change the world."

— Nelson Mandela

"Injustice anywhere is a
threat to justice everywhere."

— Dr. Martin Luther King



COURSE

Criminal Justice and Law I

CRJ 1010 • CRJ 1045

This course combines Introduction to Criminal Justice (CRJ 1010) and Correctional Process (CRJ 1045). This course concentrates on potential careers in the criminal justice system and law enforcement in general. Students will learn about the agencies and processes involved in the criminal justice system: the legislature, the police, the prosecutor, the public defender, the courts, and corrections. The course includes an analysis of the roles and problems of the criminal justice system in a democratic society, with an emphasis upon inter component relations and checks and balances. This course aligns with the Colorado Community College course Introduction to Criminal Justice (CRJ 1010) and Correctional Process (CRJ 1045).

COURSE

Criminal Justice and Law II

CRJ 2005 • CRJ 2057

This course combines Principles of Criminal Law (CRJ 2005) and Victimology (CRJ 2057). Principles of Criminal Law focuses on common law and statutory law crimes, the Model Penal Code, elements defining crimes and penalties, defenses to criminal accusations, and definitions and distinctions between criminal and civil law. Victimology demonstrates to the student the role the victim plays in the criminal justice system. The traditional response that a victim receives from the system will be studied and the psychological, emotional and financial impact these responses have on victimization will be analyzed. This course aligns with the Colorado Community College course Principles of Criminal Law (CRJ 2005) and Victimology (CRJ 2057).

Careers in Criminal Justice

- **Licensed Legal Paraprofessional**
- **Police Officer**
- **Crime Analyst**
- **Criminologist**
- **Criminal Defense Attorney**
- **Loss Prevention Specialist**
- **Victim Advocate**
- **Intelligence Analyst**
- **Postal Inspector**
- **Prosecutor**
- **Paralegal**
- **Criminal Justice Teacher**
- **Forensic Psychologist**
- **Probation Officer**
- **Corrections Counselor**
- **Correctional Officer**
- **Parole Officer**
- **Social Worker**
- **Drug Enforcement Agent**
- **Bureau of Investigations Agent**
- **Judge Advocate General (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, Coast Guard)**
- **Policy Advocacy**
- **Public Safety Dispatcher**



Students have the opportunity to earn up to 12 concurrent enrollment credits via Community College of Aurora.