

American Lawyers Alliance Teacher of the Year Awards Application

ALA National Teacher of the Year and Lillian B. Jarvis Teacher of the Year Combined Application Form

Awards and Deadline

This year, at our Annual Meeting next summer, the American Lawyers Alliance will be giving out two (2) \$4,000 Teacher of the Year Awards - our National Law-Related Education Teacher of the Year and our Linda B. Jarvis Law-Related Teacher of the Year for those teachers working in Title 1 schools.

Each winner will be reimbursed up to \$1,000 for travel related expenses if they decide to attend the Annual Meeting.

Further, we are most please to announce that the American Lawyers Alliance will be donating an additional \$1,000 to each of the winners' schools!

The deadline for applications is May 31, 2026.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name *

Jennifer Ann Casanova-Gonzalez
.....

Mailing Address *

San Antonio Texas 78221
.....

Cell Phone *

.....

Home Phone

.....

Preferred Email *

.....

Number of Classes Taught *

7

.....

Grade Levels *

9th-12th grade

.....

Please indicate what specific classes you teach: example: English, Social Studies, Humanities, *
History, Political Science, etc.

Political Science I, Public Administration, Practicum In Local, State and Federal Law, Administration, AVID I-
IV and Academic Mentoring

.....

Number of Students *

155

.....

Please indicate let us know what Law-Related Education Awards your students have received this past year. *

Mock Trial National Qualifiers, 47 Students Qualified for the State Mock Trial and Presented at the State Capitol, Law Day Essay Contest State Winner, SkillsUSA State Winners, Speech and Debate Regional Champions

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

Fox Tech High School -

School Mailing Address *

637 North Main Street San Antonio Texas 78205

Title 1 School? *

Yes

No

Name of Principal/Headmaster *

Veronica Valdovinos

Telephone of Principal/Headmaster *

210-738-9730

Email of Principal/Headmaster *

vvaldovinos1@saisd.net

School Email

School Website *

<https://www.saisd.net/o/foxtech>

School District *

San Antonio Independent School District

PRESS RELEASE INFORMATION AND DOCUMENT UPLOAD

Items that Must be Submitted with this Application

1. This completed online Application Form
2. A résumé/CV
3. A summary of law-related education activities
4. Two letters of recommendation from persons familiar with your expertise
5. Relevant supportive evidence such as newspaper articles or other publications that support your efforts

Name and address of Local Newspaper for Winner Publication

San Antonio Express News San Antonio Express-News 301 Avenue E. San Antonio, TX 78205

Pages or Addresses of Other Digital Platforms for Winner Publication (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)

Allison Boerger @ ABOERGER1@saisd.net SAISD Publications Department 514 W Quincy St San Antonio, Texas 78212 210-554-2250 (phone) 210-228-3130 (EFax)

Please let us know how you learned about this Award?

Email publication from local ALA

PLEASE CONSOLIDATE LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS INTO A SINGLE PDF FILE BEFORE UPLOADING. Failure to do so may result in missing documents. Any additional documents may be emailed directly to toy@americanlawyersalliance.org.

Please upload your documents here. *

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PERMISSION

By checking here, the nominee, if chosen as a Teacher of the Year, has given permission to the ALA to notify his or her alumni association, the relevant State Bar Association, and the American Bar Association and to post it on the ALA website and Facebook page.

*

I grant permission

I do not grant permission

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Google Forms

Jennifer Ann Casanova-Gonzalez

Professional Summary

Dynamic and accomplished educator with over 16 years of classroom experience, extensive leadership in Career & Technical Student Organizations, and a proven record of developing high-performing student teams. Demonstrated success in program creation, chapter growth, student mentorship, and statewide/national competition leadership. Strong academic foundation with dual master's degrees and deep expertise in political science, special education, and youth leadership development.

Professional Experience

Department Chair / Educator

Fox Tech High School -Judge Andy Mireles Law Magnet • 2010-2026

- Over 15 years of experience teaching and mentoring students across diverse academic and extracurricular programs.
 - Lead department operations, curriculum alignment, teacher support, and program development.
 - Mentor and coach students participating in SkillsUSA, Mock Trial, and Youth & Government, consistently producing state and national qualifiers.
 - Build strong community partnerships and foster a culture of leadership, civic engagement, and academic excellence.
-

Leadership & Program Development

SkillsUSA Advisor

- Qualified students for state competition every year since 2018.
- Coached teams to national competition for three consecutive years.

- Earned Statesman Award and completed SkillsUSA Summer Leadership.
- Attended the Washington Leadership Institute to strengthen chapter leadership and advocacy.
- Founded a new SkillsUSA chapter that has grown over 300% since 2018, becoming one of the most active programs on campus.

Mock Trial Coach

- Led competitive teams with consistent success at district and state levels.
- Developed student advocacy, public speaking, and legal reasoning skills through rigorous preparation and mentorship.

YMCA Youth & Government Advisor

- State qualifier every year since 2017.
 - Support and prepare 50+ students annually to compete at the state conference.
 - Served as a state officer and coached students to become national finalists for the past five years.
 - Promote civic engagement, legislative literacy, and leadership development.
-

Education

Master of Education (M.Ed.) – Special Education

Texas A&M University–San Antonio (2014)

Master of Arts – Political Science

Texas State University (2006)

Bachelor of Arts – Political Science

Texas A&M University (1997)

Skills

- Program Leadership & Chapter Development
- Student Coaching & Mentorship
- Public Speaking & Communication

- Curriculum Development
 - Competition Preparation & Strategy
 - Civic Engagement & Youth Leadership
 - Team Building & Organizational Growth
 - Special Education Expertise
-

Honors & Achievements

- Fox Tech Teacher of the Year
- San Antonio YMCA Youth Mentor Volunteer of the Year
- SkillsUSA Statesman Award
- National Finalist Coach (Youth & Government)
- Two-Time Nationals Qualifying Coach (SkillsUSA)

Personal Note: I am native San Antonioan that loves her city and adventures. I like to travel and explore new places. I am married to my wonderful husband and we have one cat! I have a step son, daughter in law and my precious granddaughter who is the light of my life. I consider shopping an olympic sport, love beach days and a foodie! My hobbies include reading and a great afternoon at the movies.

Jennifer Ann Casanova-Gonzalez

I have had the privilege of serving the students of Fox Tech High School's Judge Andy Mireles Law Magnet for the last sixteen years. As a native San Antonian, I walk into my classroom every day with a deep sense of responsibility to the community that raised me. My work is grounded in a simple belief: when students are given opportunity, support, and a voice, they rise. Everything I do, every program I build, every trip I plan, every late afternoon spent coaching is rooted in that belief.

My journey as an educator has always been about creating access. Many of my students come from communities within the 78207 zip code, historically one of the poorest zip codes in the state of Texas. Here opportunities are limited, resources are stretched, and professional networks are scarce. I see my role as someone who opens doors, removes barriers, and helps students step into spaces they may have never imagined for themselves. Over the years, this mission has shaped the programs I lead, the partnerships I build, and the experiences I create for my students.

One of the most meaningful initiatives I have created is our campus clothing closet, a passion project born from a simple but urgent need. I watched students prepare for competitions, courtroom appearances, job interviews, and college interviews with determination and talent, but without access to the professional clothing required to walk into those spaces with confidence. Many families simply did not have the means to purchase suits, blazers, dress shoes, or courtroom-appropriate attire. I never wanted clothing to be the reason a student hesitated or felt out of place.

So I built a clothing closet from the ground up, sustained entirely through community donations. Today, it stands as a symbol of dignity and equity. Students can select professional outfits that help them feel prepared, respected, and empowered. Watching a student straighten their tie or smooth the sleeves of a blazer before stepping into a courtroom reminds me why my work matters. Confidence is transformative and every student deserves to feel like they belong in every room they enter, especially the courtroom.

My commitment to real-world learning extends far beyond attire. I believe deeply that students must experience the legal system firsthand to truly understand it. Each year, I organize field trips to the federal courthouse, district courthouse, and the Texas State Capitol, giving students the opportunity to witness all three branches of government in action. They observe trials, meet judges and attorneys, speak with lawmakers, and see the justice system not as an abstract concept, but as a living, breathing institution that shapes their world. These experiences often spark career interests, ignite passions, and deepen students' understanding of their own power as citizens.

Many of my students also participate in internships with law firms, government offices, and community organizations. These opportunities allow them to apply their learning, develop

professional skills, and envision themselves in future careers. I have watched students who once doubted their potential walk into internships with hesitation and walk out with purpose.

Inside the classroom, I work to bring the law to life. I design simulations, courtroom activities, legislative exercises, and advocacy projects that challenge students to think critically, analyze complex issues, and use their voices. My classroom is a place where students learn not only content, but also how to navigate systems, advocate for themselves, and engage with the world as informed, empowered individuals.

Beyond the classroom, I have built and led programs that shape student leadership on a larger scale. Through SkillsUSA, I have grown our chapter by more than 300%, coaching students to state competition every year since 2018 and to national competition for three consecutive years. In Youth & Government, I prepare more than 50 students annually for the state conference, guiding them through legislative processes and public speaking. For the past five years, my students have earned national finalist recognition. Through Mock Trial, I help students develop courtroom presence, legal reasoning, and advocacy skills, preparing them for district and state competitions. This year I had 52 students advance to the State Championship Mock Trial with the Youth and Government Program and this summer I have multiple students that will continue on to the National Championship in July.

These programs are more than extracurricular activities; they are pathways to confidence, leadership, and opportunity. They teach students to think, speak, collaborate, and lead. They help students discover who they are and who they can become.

My work is fueled by the belief that education is not just about academics it is about transformation. It is about helping students see themselves as capable, powerful, and deserving of every opportunity. It is about giving them the tools to walk into any room, any courtroom, any interview, and know they belong.

My students are not with me for only four years, they are my students for life. Teaching is my way of being, which is why I have attended more than 42 college graduations across Texas and in multiple states, celebrated law school commencements, and even watched a former student take his oath as an attorney. These milestones remind me that education is generational work, and my commitment extends far beyond the classroom. I want every young person I teach to know that someone is cheering them on long after they leave my campus, invested in their success and honored to remain part of their extraordinary future.

Outside of school, I am a wife, stepmother, and grandmother. My granddaughter is the light of my life, and she reminds me daily why this work matters. I want her and every student I teach to grow up in a world where opportunity is not determined by zip code, resources, or circumstance.

I am proud of the programs I have built, the students I have mentored, and the community I serve. But more than anything, I am proud of the young people who walk into my classroom every day with hope, resilience, and potential. They are the reason I teach. They are the reason I lead. And they are the reason I will always fight to create opportunities that help them rise.



JENNIFER CASANOVA-GONZALEZ SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

pushing, cultivating, & supporting
legal minds since 2010

RBG'S Legacy continuing to inspire

<https://www.ksat.com/news/local/2020/09/25/fox-tech-high-school-law-students-find-inspiration-in-justice-rbgs-legacy/>



Description

Our students stepped in front of the cameras to share how Ruth Bader Ginsburg's legacy continues to shape the way young women see themselves in the judicial system. By studying the courts, they're not just learning about laws and precedents, they're discovering their own power, their voice, and their place in shaping a more equitable future. Watching these young women speak with confidence about justice, representation, and the role of women in the courts is a reminder of civic education and the importance of the role of myself in the classroom.

Guest Speakers



Description

Guest speakers bring real-world wisdom into our classroom, showing students how the lessons they learn today shape the futures they're building tomorrow. I have created a very extensive connection with the legal community in San Antonio through our local leaders to ensure our students are exposed to every facet of the legal profession.

Sheriff Salazar Recognition Ceremony

https://www.instagram.com/p/DNN9nwHS_gsf?img_index=7&igsh=MW9lZXY0MmRodGloZA==



Description

Proud of our students for taking part in a formal celebration honoring our local sheriff, a moment that connects them directly with the legal community they study in class. Opportunities like this allow young people, especially aspiring women in law, to build real relationships with legal professionals and see firsthand how leadership, service, and justice come together in our community.



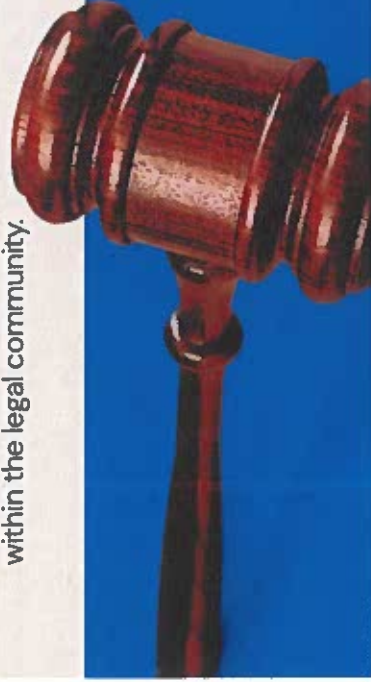
Kids in the Court Room

Description

My students this year are leading hands-on lessons in justice at the Bexar County Courthouse guiding local 5th graders through a mock trial and introducing them to the vital role of the courts.

Why

Experiences like this turn civic learning into real-world leadership, showing young students how the judicial system works and empowering my students to step confidently into their place within the legal community.



SkillsUSA National Competitors



Description

My students at the SkillsUSA National Championship in Atlanta, where they proudly represented the legal profession in the Career Pathway Showcase contest. Among more than 18,000 competitors nationwide, they earned an impressive third-place finish demonstrating professionalism, expertise, and a deep commitment to highlighting the importance of law-related careers. Their work reflects the power of career and technical education to open doors, build confidence, and prepare the next generation of leaders in justice and public service.

Dallas Bar Mock Trial



Description

The program provides a great way for students to gain an "insider's view" of our judicial system, plus, they gain confidence speaking in front of others and have a lot of fun at the same time.

Legacy & Partnership

We are grateful for our partnership with local attorneys who generously serve as mentors and coaches alongside me, guiding our students as they prepare for competition. Through their support, students gain authentic experience in courtroom protocol, legal procedure, and the responsibilities of serving as effective witnesses. This collaboration strengthens students' confidence, professionalism, and understanding of the legal field, helping them build skills that will carry them far beyond the classroom.



<https://www.bhlawpc.com/post/fox-tech-mock-trial-comes-back-in-full-force>

Saludatorian Speech

<https://www.saisd.net/page/fox-tech-high-school-graduation-2023>



Description

Our program continues to open doors for students in powerful, life-changing ways. This young woman is a shining example: through our courses and dual-credit opportunities, she accelerated her education, completed her college degree in just three years, at UT Austin. Even more inspiring, she continues to return as a mentor to our underclassmen proving how early exposure to law-related pathways can shape futures, build confidence, and create leaders who give back to the next generation.

Graduation 2026



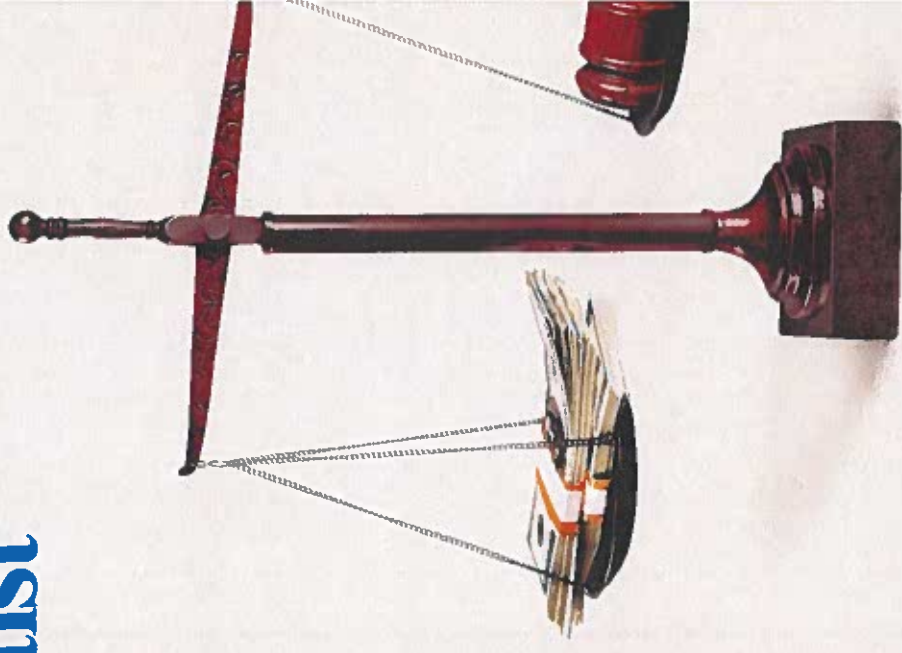
Meaningful Words

"The Judge Andy Mireles Law Magnet Program, especially through the endless support of my advisor, Ms.Casanova, has shaped me in ways I can not fully express. I'm exiting high school with 4 internships, 2 years of national level competition, trial skills and experience advocating for what matters most to me with national legislators. Most importantly I know that I am capable, regardless of circumstances, of making a difference. I owe a great deal of gratitude to Ms.Casanova for that. She never told me I couldn't, that I was dreaming to big, or that it wasn't realistic, instead she greeted me with "okay, let's make it happen" without fail."

National Courtroom Artist

<https://www.saisd.net/article/2202434>

"So when this year, she was able to combine that love of art with her passion for law in the Courtroom Artist portion of the Mock Trial Competition, Anderson said it brought her so much joy. ... Joy and Awards."



Description

Our program exposes students to every facet of careers in the legal field, helping them discover how their unique strengths can shape their future. This student's fifth-place finish at the National Mock Trial Competition in Courtroom Artistry is a powerful example; she blended her passion for law with her talent for art to create a compelling, nationally recognized presentation. Her success reflects the broader impact of our program: students are encouraged to explore, innovate, and expand their interests while gaining real experience in the legal profession.

WASHINGTON LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE

Description

Witnessing my students stand inside the Capitol, walk the halls of the Supreme Court, and view the White House up close was a powerful reminder of why we teach leadership. These moments make the government real, inspire curiosity, and show students that their voices matter. SkillsUSA Washington Leadership Institute gave them a front-row seat to the institutions that shape our nation – and they rose to the moment. We were also able to meet with United States Representatives and speak on the importance of Perkins funding to continue funding Career and Technical programs like ours for future generations. They truly are our advocates for Law Related Education.





YMCA NATIONAL COMPETITOR



“I really give credit to Ms. Casanova and some of the upperclassmen that were pushing me to definitely strive for my dreams of becoming an attorney my freshman year.”

<https://www.saisd.net/article/2812575>

Description

YMCA Youth & Government Mock Trial pushes students to think critically, lead decisively, and uphold fairness in the courtroom. Watching my student preside as a judge, ruling on objections, guiding proceedings, and delivering verdicts was powerful. Her hard work paid off with a 1st place finish at the State Championship and earning a spot at Nationals this July. The future of justice looks bright.



Law Day Essay

Description

Proud to continue leading the Law Day Essay initiative with the San Antonio Bexar County Courthouse. Each year, my students craft editorials tied to the national theme, and our local winners receive scholarships supported by the legal community and the Federal Courts Committee. The top essay also represents San Antonio at the state competition.

This year, my student earned First Place at the State level for a compelling editorial on the Rule of Law and the Texas Constitution, a powerful reflection of the values we strive to build in future legal professionals.



Clothing Closet - Change Makers



Description

The Clothing Closet began as a simple observation my students and I saw a need in our school community and refused to ignore it. Together, we wrote a grant proposal, shared our vision, and earned a national YMCA Changemakers grant. What started as a small idea has grown into the passion project it is today, providing dignity, support, and opportunity for students who need it most.

Impact

The Clothing Closet has had a profound impact on our school community. By providing access to essential clothing items, we've helped students overcome obstacles that often go unseen, from financial hardship to the quiet challenges of fitting in and feeling confident. This resource ensures that every student can walk in with dignity and focus on what truly matters: their education and their future.

Our donors play a vital role in this mission. Their contributions not only supply clothing but also send a powerful message of support and solidarity. Together, we've built a program that uplifts students, strengthens community ties, and reflects the very best of what a school can be.

Teacher of the Year

<https://share.google/Bs4zjFRWYGcmkjBYE>



Description

I was deeply honored to be named Teacher of the Year 2023 from our campus, but this recognition reflects the hard work and heart of my students. They challenge me, motivate me, and remind me why education matters. Their growth is the true reward, and I'm grateful to walk alongside them.

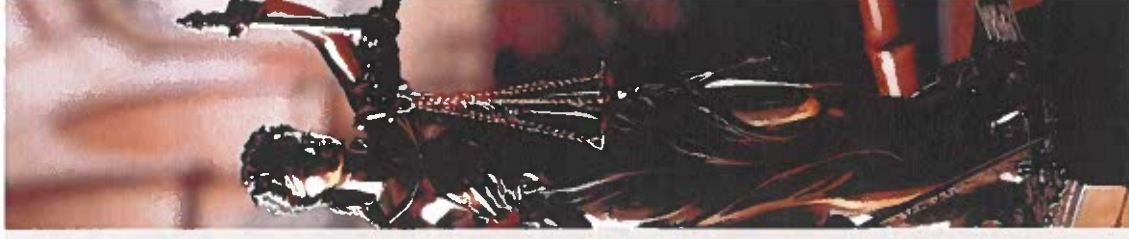
2012 Blue Ribbon

<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/tx7-fox-technical-high-school/pdf-71839.pdf>



Description

Being part of a campus recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School is an honor, but what means the most is knowing our Law Magnet played a role in that success. My students' hard work, service, and leadership helped shape the culture that earned this distinction. Watching them meet with local leaders and confidently discuss the work they do on our campus was a powerful reminder of why this program matters.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Proud to continue enriching and
contributing to the next great legal minds





PETER SAKAI
COUNTY JUDGE

May 28, 2026

To the Esteemed American Lawyers Alliance Selection Committee:

It is with both deep respect and heartfelt admiration that I submit this letter in enthusiastic support for Jennifer Ann Casanova-Gonzalez's nomination for the American Lawyers Alliance Teacher of the Year award. My relationship with Jennifer is one that spans decades, rooted in the earliest days of her childhood. Even then, her precocious intellect and remarkable social acumen set her apart—she was the child with a question for every answer and a friend for everyone she met. These qualities have only blossomed with time, shaping her into the extraordinary educator and advocate for the legal profession she is today.

Our connection has deepened through our mutual involvement with the Judge Andy Mireles Family Foundation, where Jennifer's commitment to service and community engagement is ever-present. She has been a guiding force in carrying forward Judge Mireles's legacy, fostering opportunities for youth, and ensuring that experiential learning remains at the heart of all educational endeavors.

Jennifer's advocacy for experiential learning, particularly through the Career and Technology Education program, which she chairs, demonstrates her visionary approach to teaching. As Chair of the Andy Mireles Law Magnet, she has transformed the program into a beacon of excellence. Under her stewardship, the Law Magnet boasts a 100% graduation rate—an astounding achievement that speaks not only to her leadership but also to her unwavering belief in her students' potential.

Her efforts extend far beyond the classroom. Jennifer has built lasting partnerships with local St. Mary's University School of Law, the County Judge's office, and the San Antonio Bar Auxiliary, and law firms turning community resources into student opportunities. Her network of collaborators isn't just a testament to her initiative; it's a reflection of her ability to unite people around a shared purpose—empowering the next generation. The resounding support she receives from these partners is an endorsement of both her character and her impact.

Jennifer's excellence has not gone unnoticed. She was rightfully named Fox Tech Teacher of the Year, an honor that recognizes her professional achievements and the lasting influence she has on her students. Speak with any of her students, and you'll hear stories of transformation, encouragement, and a deep sense of belonging. Jennifer inspires confidence and ambition, cultivating young leaders who carry forward her ideals of service and justice.

At her core, Jennifer is a public servant, compassionate, dedicated, and relentless in her pursuit of equity and opportunity for all. Her passion for education is matched only by her integrity and humility. She leads, teaches, and advocates not for recognition, but because she believes in the promise of every student she encounters.

With the utmost confidence, I strongly recommend Jennifer Ann Casanova-Gonzalez for the American Lawyers Alliance Teacher of the Year award. She is a gifted educator, a visionary leader, and a steadfast advocate for her students and her community. Her legacy is one of service and transformation, and she is most deserving of this recognition.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Sakai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "S".

Peter Sakai, Bexar County Judge