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AAE mock trial club advances to semifinals

BY TOMOYA SHIMURA

STAFF WRITER

APPLE VALLEY • Academy for Academic Excellence is the only school from the High Desert to advance to the semifinals of this year's San Bernardino County high school mock trial competition.

AAE was among 13 teams out of 27 that finished with a 3-1 record during the month-long regular rounds. The Apple Valley school made the top six in cumulative percentage points, AAE teacher coach Colleen Williams said.

This is the first time the AAE club advanced to the semifinals since it started four years ago.

"The quality of the students we have and their commitment just made a difference," Williams said. "And our attorney coaches are the best."

Deputy District Attorney Carrie Halgrimson and Deputy Public Defender Kellie Byward, both of whom work in Victorville, coached AAE.

Williams said this year's team consists of students from ninth through 12th grade, and 10 out of 17 members were new to mock trial.

The club has practiced three nights a week at the Victorville courthouse since Oct. 10 to prepare for the competition, Williams said.

AAE will face Rialto High School during the two-day semifinals on Tuesday and Wednesday, while defending county champion Redlands East Valley takes on Cajon and Redlands faces Ontario Christian. The top two scoring teams in the semifinals will advance to the finals on Dec. 10.

All these semifinal matches are open to the public and will be held at the San Bernardino Civil Courthouse at 303 W. Third Street in San Bernardino. Both days of the semifinals will start at 5 p.m.

Tomoya Shimura may be reached at (760) 955-5368 or TShimura@VVDailyPress.com

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ACADEMY OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE TO THE NEXT ROUND: The Academy for Academic Excellence mock trial team is shown after advancing to the competition's next round.