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U.S. Department of Justice
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About the cover:

Police and school security officers have become an integral part of many schools. Here Chicago policeman Howard Kilroy is surrounded by children outside Kosciuszko Elementary School. Photo copyright © 1989, the Times Mirror Company.

22



26

CONTENTS

127104
 4 School security:
 'Who you gonna call?'

By Peter D. Blauvelt

127110
 9 Designing safer schools

By Timothy D. Crowe

127111
 14 Expect the unexpected

By Scott Poland and Gayle Pitcher

127112
 20 Training teachers for
 troubled times

By Jerry Glenn

127113
 22 Town and country
 violence

By Paul M. Kingery, Elaheh Mirzaee,
 B.E. Pruitt and Robert S. Hurley

127114
 26 Developing a love
 for the law

Updates
 NCJRS

DEC 12 1990

ACQUISITIONS

2 NSSC Update

31 National Update 127115

32 Legislative Update 127116

33 Legal Update

34 Resource Update

Resources

18 NSSC Publications

19 NSSC Resource Papers
 and Display Posters

29 School Safety Subscriptions

30 NSSC Documentaries

35 'Principals of Leadership'

*Students in grades K-12 get a hands-on look
at our nation's legal system
through Law-Related Education programs.*

Developing a love for the law

A visitor in the hallways of a small, Midwestern school may encounter students of all ages arguing vociferously in courtroom settings as they act as judges, lawyers, bailiffs, defendants, jurors and court clerks. The visitor would hear middle and elementary school children using a legal vocabulary that many adult citizens never become familiar with, much less feel comfortable in using. High school students could be observed engaging younger students in lively debates about locker room searches for drugs or weapons or freedom of the press in student publications or conducting mock trials for drunk driving, theft, battery and murder.

Teaching constitutional values

What's going on? The mock trials and free-ranging debates that would delight Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and the other authors of the Constitution are the centerpiece of a national education program, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) since 1978, to prevent delinquency. OJJDP's approach was built on a belief that teaching students about the law through active, personal engagement could give them a deeper under-

standing. By bringing alive the concepts of statutes that often strike youth as arbitrary or merely prohibitive, OJJDP hoped to link legal and constitutional matters to everyday life. What makes the fireworks and dramatics work is OJJDP's Law-Related Education (LRE), a curriculum for elementary through high school students.

The setting for LRE programs may be Chicago, Illinois; Garner, North Carolina; Garden City, Kansas; Lansing, Michigan, or any number of towns and cities across the country. It can be an elementary, middle or secondary school; an urban, suburban or rural school; a court-appointed classroom, probation camp, reform or training school; or any setting suitable for citizenship education in the law.

The settings vary, but the educational philosophy of LRE is the constant — that the best way to have youth understand the law is to involve them in a particular case or situation which affects the way they live their lives and touches their personal decisions on drugs, driving, respect for property and respect for life.

To create programs that both reach students at all levels and remain positively oriented toward the education of all citizens, OJJDP funds the National Training and Dissemination Program (NTDP). Five organizations concerned with education in citizenship and the

American legal system participate in the LRE program: the American Bar Association (ABA), the Center for Civic Education (CCE), the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF), the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law (NICEL), and the Phi Alpha Delta Public Service Center.

These organizations deliver LRE in many different creative programs; they devise and deliver the training, curricula, teaching materials and local contacts that help communities reach the common goal — the education of citizens who know how our government and legal system work, believe they have a responsibility to participate, and have the logical and verbal skills to do so effectively.

Citizen education in the law

Creativity and adaptability are two distinguishing characteristics of LRE. No single format or lesson plan dominates the approach. LRE strategies may be inserted as a course, or as part of existing courses; as a full curriculum, kindergarten through 12th grade; as a special event for all students on a day set aside to study law and the Constitution; as a series of courses offering special opportunities for students interested in public service; or as a non-academic program in training and reform school settings.

What makes all these expressions of

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LRE exciting for its creators, teachers and students is the spark of recognition struck when students grasp key analogies. For example, this happens when students make the connection between fairness in a water-fountain line or the value of rules in sports with critical issues of equal opportunity and due process in the society at large.

LRE gives students a personal stake in learning and helps them see how elementary and high school issues are fundamentally the same as the legal issues of the court system and the constitutional conflicts occupying the front page of the newspaper.

LRE shows students how values — the legal, constitutional values of the society — develop from the conflicts between personal freedom and the necessity for legal restraints in everyday life. The resulting insights may make for uncommon bedfellows. “Here is the neighborhood tough guy,” points out a social studies coordinator for K-12, “talking about rules of law and conduct in court.”

The educational focus of LRE is on civil, criminal and constitutional themes as they revolve around familiar topics such as consumer protection, housing law, voting rights, child custody, spouse and child abuse, and traffic laws. LRE also fosters teaching scenarios on themes that may, at first, seem remote but were close and dear to the everyday lives of the authors of the Constitution — search and seizure; indentured servitude; political asylum; and freedom of speech, press and religion. Finally, some issues are just as vital but require careful application of the Constitution to new situations — drunk driving, drug testing on the job and in the schools, handgun registration, corporate takeovers, environmental issues, computer crime and proprietary rights for computer programs.

LRE programs teach objective facts but communicate them through the immediacy of group process. Mock trials, role playing, debates, writing of persuasive briefs, police ride-alongs, home



security audits, case studies and legislative assemblies are just a few of the activities used to teach students about justice concepts. The retention rate may be tested objectively, depending on the context, but as with all good education, the less tangible byproducts may turn out to be the most cherished: a greater sense of civic virtue, an increased understanding of the legal and constitutional struggles of others, increased respect for law officers and authority figures, the experience of resolving disputes, and an increase of law-abiding behavior.

Via teaching techniques that emphasize personal discovery through role playing and contact with criminal justice authorities, LRE students can realize that the American legal structure, rooted in personal rights, is fundamentally fair and that good citizens therefore obey the law from self-interest.

A few vignettes of the way LRE works throughout the country may exemplify the best of the program:

- One LRE program involved its stu-

dents in a case ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1988, the *Hazelwood* decision involving student press rights. Trying to understand how the rule applied to their own school publications, students identified strongly with the pros and cons that motivated the parties in the case but found they had to analyze the legal reasoning and precedents to grasp the final ruling.

- In the San Juan Unified School District near Sacramento, California, LRE high school students conduct mock trials on underground newspapers, drug use, theft and battery for students in grades K through 12.
- The University of San Francisco and several other Bay area law schools grant law students academic credit to teach practical law courses in high schools and middle schools and solicit community resource persons, such as San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos, to visit classrooms. The program focuses on local issues, such as the rights of the homeless, and features

law awareness and crime prevention courses at the middle school level.

- A student court program at Rochester Adams High School in Oakland County, Michigan, requires students to pass an exam before they can practice as counsel on school discipline problems. Under the school's court constitution, a member of the Michigan Bar Association must be present at any session that may, for example, find a student guilty and sentence him or her to a fixed number of work hours or recommend suspension. Adams teacher Greg Clevenger (one of two outstanding secondary social studies teachers of the year in 1989) points to a zero recidivism rate for the student court and a general decline of vandalism as proof of the program's value. The program has spread to other parts of the state.
- Garner High School in Garner, North Carolina, immerses its seniors in an 18-week class in law and justice with the focus on constitutional law for the first nine weeks. During the second half of the course, students hear guest criminal justice professionals make classroom presentations on police and courtroom methods.
- In two states, law students in the Phi Alpha Delta (PAD) law fraternity developed successful LRE programs that the National Training and Dissemination Program promotes as nationwide models for teaching the legal dimension of drug and alcohol use. PAD law students at Texas Tech University started the program by experimenting with presentations that accentuate the legal consequences of arrest and conviction for a drug or alcohol offense. Then, approaching the problem with the same desire to help students see the consequences of their actions, PAD students at Hamline University in Minnesota initiated a mock trial program to expose secondary students to each phase of a drunk driving case. To make this program usable for other fraternity chapters, PAD developed a training and resource man-

ual with discussion guides and sample mock trial sessions that help high school students identify their values, attitudes and expectations, and determine their degree of personal risk in using drugs or alcohol. From these beginnings in Texas and Minnesota, the PAD program has spread to 40 of PAD's 170 chapters in 20 states. PAD's goal: a law student volunteer program in every community where PAD has a chapter.

The value of law-related education

The long-term effects of such broad and far-ranging programs, which sometimes occupy a full social studies curriculum and spill over into other courses, are not easy to measure quantitatively. Teacher estimates of a general reduction of vandalism or school disturbances are valuable, but not definitive. Much of what LRE does is aimed at improving general cognitive skills — such as thinking and persuasion, consensus building and human relations — and, therefore, its benefits are more likely to show up on aptitude and ability tests. Another benefit teachers observe in LRE students is pride in being in a high-profile, high-status curriculum, a general attitude that may affect citizen behavior positively but is not easily quantified.

Nevertheless, improvements in attitude and behavior are measurable to some extent. An early (1983) OJJDP-sponsored evaluation of LRE at a number of sites found that LRE inspired more understanding of the law and respect for it and that around half the students were less willing to resolve conflicts through violence or to associate with delinquent peers. Similarly, 12 Colorado schools using LRE programs experienced an increase in law-abiding behavior — defined as behavior correlating with a belief in the fairness of the system — and a decrease in delinquent behavior.

During the 1988-1989 school year, the National Training and Dissemination Program conducted a special initiative to encourage LRE programs to focus on drug education. As part of this special

initiative, CCE, CRF and NICEL developed and field-tested drug-focused LRE modules in middle and senior high schools in 20 states.

The modules require students to work together on a project calling for understanding of laws related to drug use. Each of the classes prepared a proposed drug policy for the school; developed a series of activities focusing on *California v. Greenwood*, a 1988 search and seizure case; and drafted a local ordinance for driving under the influence of alcohol. The Social Science Education Consortium reviewed student evaluations of the three programs and found that the students were very positive and interested, and they recommended only some slight adjustments and revisions in the programs for the 1989-1990 school year.

Growth for the 1990s

In 1989-1990, LRE was active in 43 states. This illustrates the real strength of the program because LRE can be effective only where local citizens and the criminal justice infrastructure are willing to work with the national office and do the groundwork. State LRE projects participate in the national effort by coordinating the local agencies, bar associations and law enforcement groups. As the coordinator of curricula, training and technical assistance, the National Training and Dissemination Program must depend on local initiative.

Since 1984, this cooperation has helped NTDP foster programs in 670 school districts, training some 52,000 teachers and resource persons to reach an estimated 2.4 million students.

At the close of the 1980s, OJJDP's LRE programs were active and successful. OJJDP's goal for the 1990s is to make LRE as basic a requirement as reading, history, mathematics and English in all public schools. Given the nurturing thousands of students have received during the last decade, LRE will continue to influence the minds of young citizens in the 1990s. □