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AUTHOR Jacobson, Michael; Lombard, Robert
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ABSTRACT

This report examines the development of law-related education (LRE), discusses the extent of its implementation in rural Illinois, and describes the efforts made by the Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law (IIPUAL) in bringing LRE to rural schools. The goals of LRE are to provide students with an understanding of the law and legal processes and to improve their citizenship skills by equipping them with knowledge of both their rights and responsibilities. Concerns about providing LRE in rural schools include geographic location and the inability of rural schools to pay for the programs. Nevertheless, rural youth have as many or more problems than urban youth and could benefit as much as urban youth from LRE. A survey conducted by the IIPUAL confirms the low status of LRE in rural schools. Administrators consistently commented that, if given the opportunity, their districts would make LRE a part of their curriculum. Other activities of the IIPUAL include establishing a library of LRE instructional materials available for loan to rural schools; implementation of satellite programming and seminars; and partnerships between Western Illinois University and rural schools in program implementation and teacher training. This report concludes that LRE programs contribute to the prevention of delinquent behavior in young people and help decrease recidivism rates for those already in juvenile detention. (LP)

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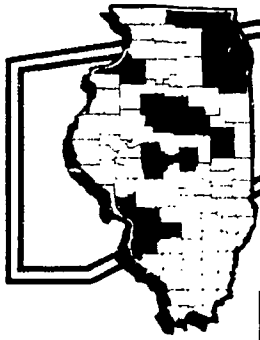
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Law-Related Education and the Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law

by Michael Jacobson and Robert Lombard¹

Given the fundamental place of law in our society, citizens need to know how the legal and political systems function, how the law affects them, and how they can affect it. Law-related education (LRE) in elementary and secondary schools explores the practical application of law to daily living. It is intended to encourage an understanding of the values and

principles on which our legal system is based (Arnetman, 1989). This Report examines the development of LRE, discusses the extent of its implementation in rural Illinois, and describes the efforts made by the *Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law* (IIPUAL) to bring LRE to rural schools.

Origin and Goals of Law Related Education

Law-related education is designed to provide students with conceptual as well as practical understanding of the law and legal processes, and to equip them with knowledge of both their rights and responsibilities, thereby improving their citizenship skills. LRE students gain an understanding of how to work within the legal system to settle civil grievances and to deal with criminal problems. They are also exposed to a reasoned explanation of the basis for rules, and are given the opportunity to develop favorable attitudes toward law enforcement and the judicial system.

The goals of law-related education clearly mirror the civic competence goal elaborated in *America 2000* and the *Illinois State Board of Education, Goals for Learning: Social Science*, Goals 1 and 5. These sources state that students need to know the specific rights and liberties guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They should understand how judicial decisions are made and how the judicial system operates. Students should understand the purposes of laws and the responsibility of citizens to comply with these laws. Finally, young Americans should recognize that constitutional rights and freedoms extend to all persons and that every individual has a responsibility to promote equal opportunity.

Similarly, the Law-Related Education Act of 1978 suggests the term 'law-related education' means education to equip

nonlawyers with knowledge and skills pertaining to the law, the legal process, and the legal system, and the fundamental principles and values on which these are based. Among the motives behind LRE are citizenship education, delinquency prevention, survival skills, critical thinking, and ethics education (Little, 1987).

The LRE movement, currently enjoying nationwide prominence, is a child of the sixties. It has been influenced by such diverse historical events and social conditions as the Vietnam conflict, urban strife, the 1967 teacher strikes in violation of anti-strike law and court injunctions, and the skepticism of government generated by Watergate (Starr, 1968; Gross, 1977; Start, 1987). Additionally, the LRE movement has been spurred by the fact that traditional attempts to teach the law were poor, often irrelevant, and failed to prepare students to assume their role as citizens in a knowledgeable and responsible manner (Ratcliffe, 1972).

Among those expressing concern for young people's lack of understanding and faith in our legal system (as manifested in soaring delinquency rates) was Earl Morris, past president of the American Bar Association's Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship. He urged state and local bar associations to work with the educational community in developing interdisciplinary law-related citizenship education (Morris, 1973). Such programs seek to insure that

¹ The authors are associate professor and assistant professor in the Department of Elementary Education and Reading, College of Education, Western Illinois University. This Rural Research Report was prepared with funding from Lt. Governor Bob Kustra, Chairman of the Rural Affairs Council. Thanks to Stuart B. Palonsky, University of Missouri, Columbia, who reviewed an earlier draft.

young Americans are offered rigorous and effective education in the law and the legal process (Santarelli, 1974).

Clearly, the marked decline in respect for the law, a serious and widespread ignorance about the law, and a lack of appreciation for the importance of law in our society are among the important considerations which led to the birth of law-related education in the sixties. The aim of these educational programs is the restoration of young people's faith in the system and the propagation of the belief that it can work on their behalf if they choose to participate actively.

Certainly there is no paucity of law-related projects currently in existence throughout the United States. Several prominent organizations dedicated to systematic instruction about the law are currently active. These include: Law in a Free Society, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Institute for Citizenship Education in the Law, the American Bar Association's Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, the Children's Legal Rights Information and Training Program, and the Phi Alpha Delta Committee for Juvenile Justice Program.

The development of relevant curriculum materials has paralleled the growth of these projects. Extensive bibliographies are evidence of the strength of teachers' interest in the field (see for example: Farwick and Terrell-Perkins, 1986; Glade, 1987). Nationwide, studies of recent developments in school social studies (Hahn, 1985) have found that LRE ranks among the top priorities within social studies, on a par with citizenship education, economic education, and critical thinking/problem-solving.

Studies on the effects of LRE on high school students suggest that such programs increase understanding of legal

concepts, and generally improve attitudes toward the law and legal personnel. Furthermore, research shows that LRE can serve as a powerful deterrent to delinquency if properly implemented (Jacobson and Palonsky, 1981; Social Science Education Consortium, 1984; Johnson, 1984; Hunter, 1987; Anderson, 1987). Recommendations for proper implementation include 1) adequate preparation and use of outside resources, 2) adequate quality and quantity of instruction, 3) judicious selection and presentation of illustrated material, 4) active student participation and interaction, 5) professional peer support for teachers, and 6) involvement of building administrators (Social Science Education Consortium, 1984; Turner, 1984). While an extensive number of law-related projects and a wide array of instructional material exist, LRE tends to remain a curricular component only in urban and suburban schools.

A variety of distinct LRE programs are currently operational in Illinois. Unfortunately, all of them are headquartered in relatively large urban areas and primarily provide services to secondary teachers. The Chicago area, for example, has Loyola University's Street Law Project, the Chicago Bar Association, and the Constitutional Rights Foundation-Chicago. While each of these projects provides extensive LRE program services to teachers and students, relatively few of their participants teach in elementary schools. According to the Illinois State Board of Education's 1989 Census of Course Offerings, LRE can be found in 45.6 percent of Illinois central city high schools, in 18.9 percent of suburban high schools, in 5.4 percent of the small city high schools, and 4.2 percent of the state's rural high schools. Several factors, including geographic location, relative wealth, and the racial and cultural makeup of the local area have prevented large numbers of students and teachers residing in disadvantaged rural school districts from reaping the benefits of law-related education.

Rural Schools

The geographic location of a school directly impacts its access to traditional academic resources. Small, rural and/or isolated schools often are disadvantaged by limited curriculum offerings, resulting from a combination of factors. Most notably, the schools' inability to attract and retain certified teachers within the geographic location (Horn, 1985), and the schools' inability to pay for the programs, facilities, and personnel (Augenblick and Nachtigal, 1985). Both factors greatly inhibit development of LRE programs.

Today, however, there are excellent non-traditional methods which address the problems of small, rural schools. TII-Network's live interactive Satellite Transmitted Academic Resources have proven effective in answering the plight of rural schools by increasing access to curriculum without physically transporting students. Although still new, these networks hold much promise for the future development of LRE programs in rural districts (Hobbs, 1985).

Rural Youth

Rural communities have often been viewed as places where children lead wholesome, trouble-free lives, away from the more urban problems of drugs, alcohol, and crime. However, the National Rural Development Institute at Western Washington University, in an analysis of data relating to the social, economic, and family problems in different community types (Helge, 1990), suggests that problems faced by rural youth are as bad or worse than those faced by urban youth. In a majority of statistical comparisons, rural children fared far worse than non-rural children (e.g., percentage of substance abuse, suicide attempts, child abuse, poverty, alcohol or drug abusing parents, illiteracy, school dropout, sexual activity/pregnancy, delinquency, etc.). The National

Rural Development Institute comments that its findings can be explained, at least in part, by both the economic difficulties facing many rural communities and the cultural factors which include limited access to educational and vocational opportunities. The problems of rural youth, exacerbated as they are by geographical constraints, clearly present special problems to providers of law-related education.

In the following section, we explore how the *Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law* is developing and targeting programs to respond to the situation of our rural youth.

Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law

Western Illinois University, in cooperation with the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), was awarded a one year (1990-1991) United States Department of Education (USDE) grant to establish the *Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law* (IIPUAL). IIPUAL represents a pioneering effort to make LRE a reality in rural schools in Illinois. Through its involvement with other LRE and educational agencies, IIPUAL has gained in depth information and experience about the unique needs of teachers throughout rural Illinois. In this section of the report we explain how the information was gathered and the subsequent actions taken by IIPUAL to promote LRE in rural Illinois.

Needs Assessment. In order to gain an accurate overview of the status of LRE in rural Illinois, the IIPUAL undertook a needs assessment study. The chief school administrator in each of the 462 districts in the 76 non-metro counties was surveyed to determine the current status of LRE. The assessment presented a comprehensive list of objectives for LRE programs to which administrators compared the actual level of LRE implementation in their rural schools with conditions as they "ought to be." Two hundred and four (204) completed questionnaires were received, representing a return rate of 44 percent. The majority of administrators included in the sample were experienced public school superintendents in rural school districts (96 percent) having a student population smaller than 750.

Respondents were given a definition of law-related education and asked to determine the importance of a series of ten objectives characterizing such programs. While recognizing the importance of many of these objectives (mean rating as either important or very important = 93 percent), a

majority observed that many objectives were not met at all or were only partially met (mean rating in terms of the realization of the objectives = 56 percent). The mean gap between degree of importance and degree of realization was approximately 36 percent. For example, 50 percent of respondents, while acknowledging that improving the law-abidedness of youth and decreasing anti-social behavior by teaching "preventative law" was important (93 percent), thought that this objective was not met in their school district. This represented a gap of 43 percent. On the other hand, administrators reported that some important areas were adequately addressed within the current curriculum. For example, respondents felt that teaching Bill of Rights principles, specifically, was important (96 percent), and 83 percent felt that need was being met. This represented a gap of only 13 percent.

While most of the respondents confessed limited personal experience with law-related education, the majority observed a disparity between the existence of LRE programs at the secondary and elementary level. Sixty-five percent reported that LRE programs were not offered at the elementary level while 55 percent stated that LRE programs were not offered at the secondary level. The majority of the sample said that there was little evidence of support for LRE in their school district. Eighty-six percent stated that LRE did not receive funding on a regular basis; LRE objectives were not usually presented in curriculum documents, and time allocated to LRE topics was, likewise, minimal. Instructional strategies normally associated with effective LRE such as role-playing, simulation, case studies, mock trials, and the Socratic method were used infrequently and relevant materials were not generally available, although administrators (66 percent) contend that the district's library or media

centers have LRE materials available for classroom use. Respondents stated that district teachers were not familiar with methods and materials associated with LRE and that LRE experiences which extend into the community occurred infrequently.

The needs assessment confirms the low status of LRE in rural schools as a priority for staff development. Although teachers have little opportunity to observe other teachers teach, they do participate in workshops and other in-service activities. Administrators in the sample maintain that in-service activities have a regular budget line, and, more

importantly, that teachers and administrators collaborate in planning and conducting these activities. However, few, if any, of these staff development opportunities deal with law-related education.

Administrators consistently commented that, if given the opportunity, their districts might make use of an LRE lending library, have at least moderate interest in a Directory of Legal Personnel, some interest in the ISBA's Mock Trial Program, and might use satellite television programming promoting career opportunities in law-related professions.

Activities of the IIPUAL

Resources. IIPUAL has established a library consisting of nearly 800 exemplary LRE instructional materials available for loan to disadvantaged rural schools. The Catalog of Library Loan Materials containing descriptions of print and non-print LRE instructional materials, has been mailed to approximately 500 school districts and Educational Service Centers in rural Illinois. The Catalog of Library Loan Materials will soon be made available electronically through the Illinois State Board of Education's electronic bulletin board. Resources in the Catalog are organized to reflect their appropriateness for elementary or secondary classrooms and are keyed to the Illinois State Board of Education's Illinois Goals for Learning: Social Science, as well as to the corresponding learning objectives. More than 250 requests for LRE resources have been processed for loan to teachers since the library service was initiated in September 1991.

Satellite Programming and Seminars. The Western Illinois University/Illinois State Board of Education Satellite Education Network funded by the Illinois General Assembly, is a member of the TI-IN Network, a cooperative educational partnership formed and funded by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) in April 1988 to develop and transmit instructional programming. This grant (STAR Schools) brought "live" instruction directly to disadvantaged elementary and secondary students. In addition to teacher training programming, prerequisite and advanced academic credit courses help meet graduation mandates by preparing students for college.

The TI-IN Network currently provides 16 high school and elementary courses in math, science, and foreign language. The Satellite Education Network provides courseware for the TI-IN Network in these areas. In addition, the TI-IN Network provides more than 250 hours of live interactive staff development and teacher training as well as 100 hours of student enrichment programming. The Satellite Educa-

tion Network currently provides approximately 90 hours of this programming. This programming ranges in content from career awareness for junior high students (Career Vision-funded by the National Science Foundation) to Early Childhood training for teachers (APPLES Magazine) and math instruction for teachers (T²TV). All programming is provided free to participating schools.

The TI-IN Network serves more than 1,000 schools in 40 states and more than 250 Chapter 1 eligible schools in 18 states. In its efforts to disseminate LRE to rural schools, the *Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law* has used the Satellite Education Network for both teacher training and to instruct students.

IIPUAL, in cooperation with the WIU/ISBE Satellite Education Network and the TI-IN United Star Network, has facilitated the ISBA's Mock Trial program by broadcasting training sessions via live interactive satellite television. Training sessions are transmitted to teachers at downlink sites located at various facilities in Illinois. In addition, IIPUAL has produced five television programs **Legal/Justice: You and the Law** aimed at junior and senior high school students which explore career opportunities in police work, law, the judiciary, and corrections. Insights into legal/justice careers are experienced through the eyes of high school students as they visit and interview police officers from the Quincy (Illinois) Police Department, practicing attorneys, Chief Judge Stephen Evans in Macomb, and Warden Rod Ahitow at the Illinois River Correctional Center in Canton, Illinois. The Satellite Education Network presented the five television programs in October and November, 1991. Broadcasts were also provided to PBS stations. Each of these television programs included a live interactive segment allowing viewers to ask the guest professional in the episode questions via telephone.

IIPUAL conducted a Law-Related Education Training Institute on the Western Illinois University campus during the summer of 1991. The week-long Institute involved 27 K-12 teachers all of whom were eligible for two semester hours of graduate credit. Twenty-seven fellowships covering the cost of tuition, room and board, and books were awarded. The course was designed to prepare teachers to treat legal concepts in social studies classes and to demonstrate activities that can be used to institutionalize LRE in school districts.

Partnerships. The Institute recognized, during its initial stages, that gaps existed in teachers' knowledge about the history and teaching of the Bill of Rights. Consequently, IIPUAL sought funding from The Bill of Rights Education Collaborative/APSA/AHA and Western Illinois University for a short course entitled: The Bill of Rights in the Elementary Classroom. This short course is designed to prepare teachers of kindergarten through sixth grade to teach Bill of Rights concepts and content in social studies. The intellectual makeup of the course is composed of content knowledge about the Bill of Rights, pedagogical knowledge of instruc-

tional strategies, and practical experience with materials and resources necessary to implement Bill of Rights teaching in elementary classrooms. The course, held during three weekends from April to September 1992, includes on-site visits to the Mormon site at Nauvoo and the Dirksen Center in Pekin as a means to enhance participants' knowledge about the roles that the individual states and the U.S. Congress have played in defending rights. Faculty for the short course are affiliated with Indiana University, the University of Missouri-Columbia, Danville Area Community College (Danville, Illinois), the Dirksen Center, and Western Illinois University. Extensive use is made of the LRE materials available in IIPUAL's lending library.

IIPUAL has also completed and distributed the Directory of Legal and Justice Personnel. The Directory, compiled with the help of the Illinois State Bar Association and Phi Alpha Delta (PAD), lists legal and justice personnel (e.g., lawyers, judges, and other participants in the justice system) willing to volunteer time and expertise to public schools in rural Illinois.

Conclusions

This report has traced the development of law-related education as a nationwide phenomenon and has described the efforts of the *Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law* to make LRE a reality in the rural schools of Illinois. A recent report assessing the impact of federally funded law-related education programs across the United States was published by Social Science Education Consortium (SSEC) of Boulder, Colorado. Report data indicate that in 1990-91 over 16,000 LRE professionals in 47 states and the District of Columbia took part in conferences or other events to plan, develop, or implement law-related education programs. In all, these participants received a total of 95,679 hours of background and training in LRE. The effects of the instruction received by these educators, LRE trainees, and legal and community resource specialists will ultimately reach out to an audience of nearly 1.2 million elementary and secondary school students.

Over the course of the past seven years the training of 14,000 professionals in law-related education has enabled over 5.7 million youth to receive the benefits of LRE curriculum. Studies have shown that when properly implemented, LRE programs contribute to the prevention of delinquent behavior in young people, and help to decrease recidivism rates in those already in juvenile detention. Despite these

impressive results, rural Illinois schools have been slow to add this exciting dimension to the teaching of social studies. Thousands of Illinois youngsters have been deprived of reaping the benefits of law-related education. However, with continued efforts by the IIPUAL, in conjunction with other agencies, this situation can be turned around.

Mabel McKinney-Browning, Staff Director of the American Bar Association's Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, states that law-related education is active participation in the learning process; that LRE is understanding the nature of and the need for law; LRE means building a partnership with the community; LRE means critical thinking; LRE means developing and reinforcing basic skills. LRE means engaging students in an exploration that leads to a greater understanding of the law, the legal system, and legal process and their role in making it work. Their journey will take them on philosophical explorations of such challenging questions as, What is fairness? and How do we assure just treatment for all citizens? These are practical explorations that will help children appreciate the importance of the law in the orderly functioning of our daily life and substantive explorations that will help them understand the importance of a participating citizenry to a democratic society (McKinney-Browning, 1987).

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