

Research Related to Implementing LRE

The studies described in this section are highly varied, ranging from in-depth case studies on how LRE is implemented in classrooms and school districts to surveys of teachers' awareness or commitment to LRE to historical analyses of development of LRE within a state. Because the variation among the studies is so great, we have not attempted to organize them into subsections, nor have we attempted to summarize this research. The references are simply presented by date, with older studies first, followed by more recent works.

Wietig, P. (1979). *The Curricular Impact of Federal and State Programs in Law Related Education*. Doctoral Dissertation. State University of New York, Buffalo.

The major question of Wietig's study was: what is the curricular impact of select federal, state, and local programs on the development of law-related curricula for elementary and secondary schools? The study was based on surveys of teachers (4-12) and administrators in 20 school districts in western New York, districts that had been involved in the Western New York Consortium for Law Related Education. Among Wietig's findings were the following: (1) teachers and administrators had a positive view of what LRE could do for their students; (2) they thought that substantial amounts of teacher training were necessary to implement such curricula; (3) they thought that infusing LRE into the ongoing curricula was the most reasonable way to implement LRE in their respective schools and districts; (4) administrative support for LRE curricula varied widely and tended to focus on financial support and on helping to schedule electives or special programs; and (5) the Amherst Title IV-C Law Project had had a significant impact on developing LRE curriculum.

Byerly, M. (1980). *The Status of Law-Related Education in Indiana Elementary Schools*. Doctoral Dissertation. Indiana State University.

The purpose of Byerly's study was to determine the status of LRE in Indiana elementary schools. A survey questionnaire was completed by 309 elementary teachers (grades K-6) in 22 elementary schools throughout Indiana (two schools were randomly selected from each of Indiana's 11 Congressional Districts). The survey contained 11 questions, including such items as the extent to which the teachers were familiar with the term law-related education, the extent to which the teachers had taken courses that would help them teach LRE, their access to LRE materials, their use of certain materials, teaching strategies, and resource people, and so forth.

The data obtained from the survey indicated that most Indiana elementary teachers were not familiar with LRE, had no training in this area, had no access to LRE materials, and were not using LRE materials, teaching strategies, or resource persons. On the other hand, the teachers indicated that they thought certain LRE concepts were important, they did spend time in teaching certain of these concepts, they thought LRE should be a required part of their preservice teacher education programs, and they were interested in having more LRE training.

Knapp, P. (1983). *An Analysis of an Educational Innovation: Law-Related Education in New York State*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Rochester.

Knapp's is basically a historical study of the development and evolution of LRE in New York state and a status report on LRE in New York around 1980. It concludes that LRE grew in New York because of the efforts of key individuals, the robust relationship between the New York State Bar Association and the New York Department of Education, and the social circumstances of the times (1960s and early 1970s). Because of the unique relationship between the aforementioned institutions, a number of LRE

projects got started and became institutionalized. These projects, in turn, represent great diversity in approach and target population.

Pickle, C. (1983). *Teacher Ability to Implement Lesson Plan Components of a Law-Related Education Curriculum in Infusing Law Concepts into Regular Classes of American History and Economics*. Doctoral Dissertation. Peabody College for Teachers, Vanderbilt University.

Pickle's doctoral study investigated teachers' ability to implement lesson plans that infused law concepts into secondary economics and U.S. history classes. The primary index of the clarity and usefulness of the lesson plans was student performance on legal knowledge. Four classes were studied, three in economics and one in U.S. history (n=4 teachers and 114 students). Additionally, Pickle used a clinical supervision model, a familiar and customary practice in the school system, to assess teacher implementation of various lesson plan components. Using this design, the study showed that law concepts could be effectively infused by teachers into their ongoing curricula.

Hyland, J. (1985). *Teaching About the Constitution: Relationships Between Teachers' Subject Matter Knowledge, Pedagogic Beliefs, and Instructional Decision Making Regarding the Selection of Content, Materials, and Activities*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

Hyland's point of departure was the importance of the Constitution as the supreme law of the land and the apparent failure of American education to educate youth about its principles. Hyland therefore sought to answer the question: what do teachers know about the Constitution and what do they believe about teaching? The focus of the study was eighth-grade teachers. Hyland discovered that the teachers taught in distinctive ways, but were largely ineffective in achieving student understanding of the Constitution. He found the teachers to be familiar with general constitutional principles, but lacking the ability to provide examples and showing limited understanding of these principles. Selection of content was narrow in scope and not often linked with student capabilities. Moreover, the textbook usually determined the materials used in classes. The study concluded that teachers required both substantive knowledge of the Constitution and pedagogic skills appropriate for teaching adolescents.

Furey, S. (1986). *The Influence of Selected Organizational Variables on the Institutionalization of Law-Related Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools*. Doctoral Dissertation. Boston University.

Furey's study was designed to test a theoretical model of the relationship between selected organizational variables and institutionalization of LRE in public school settings. Furey's model proposed that the combined strength of curriculum integration, the frequency and depth of linkage, and the disposition of the school toward education innovation should affect the institutionalization of LRE in schools. The study was based on a mail-out survey; 56 schools actually responded to the survey. Statistical analysis was conducted on 40 of the 56, based on the supposed viability of the LRE programs in those schools. In the end, Furey found few statistically significant links between her theoretical model and how LRE was institutionalized in the schools that completed her survey.

Palmer, J. (1986). *A Study of Trends in Content and Methodology in the Teaching of Government in Secondary Schools in the United States, 1930-1980*. Doctoral Dissertation. Auburn University.

The primary purpose of Palmer's research was to examine trends in content and instruction used in teaching government in U.S. secondary schools in the half decade after 1930. It is largely a secondary research study, looking at a variety of other studies that have charted the ebb and flow of rationales for social studies generally and for the government course in particular. Palmer concludes that despite many

attempts to change and improve secondary school government courses over time, curriculum and instruction actually changed very little. Furthermore, although government teachers have many options to choose from in organizing their courses, they have generally adhered to teaching facts and describing government institutions.

Cornett, J. (1987). *Teacher Personal Practical Theories and Their Influence Upon Teacher Curricular and Instructional Actions: A Case Study of a Secondary Social Studies Teacher*. Doctoral Dissertation. The Ohio State University.

Cornett's research investigated the relationship between a teacher's underlying beliefs about curriculum and instruction and actions in planning and implementing that curriculum and instruction. Specifically, this research addressed the following questions: (1) what does the teacher view as the explicit curriculum in the Problems of Democracy course? (2) what does the teacher view as her role in the development of the curriculum? and (3) what personal practical theories guide her instruction? The study was based on qualitative research.

Cornett found that several basic theories and sub-theories significantly influenced the teacher's action with respect to curriculum and instruction; while there was a significant degree of congruence between this teacher's basic beliefs (or theories) and her practice, there were also notable tensions as well; curriculum development was an isolated activity for this teacher and was viewed as appropriate when not done as a formal response to outside influences; the textbook served as the primary base for planning and for subsequent instruction; the teacher's planning clearly influenced what was taught; and student initiation was both accepted and encouraged.

Accongio, J., and B. Vaughan. (1987). "Evaluating Law-Related Education Programs: A Case Study." *International Journal of Social Education*. 2 (2): 69-78.

This article provides an overview of the School of Law and Government (magnet) program at Jefferson High School in Rochester, New York. It also describes a quasi-experimental design study of the program's effectiveness. The results of this study were used to revise the curriculum and to support needed staff development.

Social Science Education Consortium. (1989). *Institutionalizing LRE Programs: Eight Case Studies*. Unpublished Report. Boulder, CO: SSEC.

The purpose of this naturalistic research project was to examine how law-related education programs become institutionalized and what factors influence institutionalization. The researchers conducted intensive interviews with teachers, administrators, and resource persons (approximately 20 per site) at eight sites that had participated in the National Training and Dissemination Program (the predecessor to Youth for Justice) and were judged to have strong LRE programs. The sites were also selected to provide diversity in geographic location, general demographic characteristics, school district size, and organizational base of the state LRE project. Factors that were found to influence the institutionalization of LRE programs included the nature of the innovation (materials used, suggested teaching strategies and their relationship to district and teacher norms, etc.), school district characteristics (organization route/power and decision-making patterns, sources and kinds of program support, etc.), social climate, characteristics of individual teachers involved, and manner of implementation (training and follow-up support available and decisions about infusion, electives, and mandating).

Hardin, J., and G. Johnson. (1991). *Teachers Speak Out on Law-Related Education: Summary Report on the SPICE IV National Teachers' Survey*. Winston-Salem, NC: Center for Research and Development in Law-Related Education (CRADLE).

The study reported here was a needs assessment of teachers of LRE and citizenship. Some 1,284 K-12 teachers responded to the survey. Among the findings were: (1) need for a clearer definition of LRE; (2) need for specialized training; and (3) need for better access to materials and resources. The survey results also provide information about the variety of LRE programs being implemented and the varying stages of institutionalization. The teachers also seem quite consistent in terms of the purported impact on students of LRE, including students becoming more interested in their studies, more interested and caring about important legal and ethical issues, and students learning to think for themselves.

Jacobson, M., and R. Lombard. (1992). "Law-Related Education and the Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law." *Rural Research Report*. 3 (9).

This report examines the development of LRE in rural Illinois. Concerns about providing LRE in rural schools include geographic location and the inability of rural schools to pay for the programs. Even so, rural youth have as many or more problems as urban youth and could benefit as much from LRE. A survey conducted by the Illinois Institute for Public Understanding About the Law confirmed the low status of LRE in rural schools even though school administrators consistently commented that they would make LRE part of their schools' curriculum if they had the opportunity. The remainder of the report discusses various IIPUL activities designed for reaching rural schools (e.g., library loan of LRE materials and satellite programming and seminars).

Mitchell, R. (1992). *Testing for Learning: How New Approaches to Evaluation Can Improve American Schools*. New York: The Free Press.

To say that Mitchell was high on the evaluation process used in the We the People... competition would be an understatement. "The competition and preparation for it have lasting effects on the students' learning. Teachers assert that the knowledge learned from the curriculum and the competition is drawn on all year." As one teacher put it, "Over and over they [students] refer back to such concepts as civic virtue or right to revolution in order to explain and put in context certain historical and modern events." Mitchell: "The competition has enormous potential as a model for the evaluation of history/social studies and government classes. It is the most imaginative and well-organized social studies assessment I know of--more impressive than current ideas at the state level. It promotes student responsibility for their own learning, makes teachers into guides rather than authorities, gives the subject a 'real life' importance for students, and allows the students to experience a stimulation of healthy risk." "That was the worst thing I've ever had to do, and the best," said one student. The mystery is why 'We the People...' has not been seized as a model. The evaluation is faithful to the intent of social studies and government: understanding the Constitution's origins, how it works, and its application today.... If a model such as the 'We the People...' competition were adopted and community members became expected members of evaluation teams, the schools would go a long way to solving their public relations problems...."

O'Brien, J. (1992). *An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Federal Government and National Law-Related Education Projects, 1962-1987*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Virginia.

O'Brien's is an historical study of the relationship between federal government funding sources and select national LRE projects. He organizes the 25-year focus of his study in three periods, which are distinguished by differing rationales and approaches to LRE as well as by the prevailing sources of federal funds. The programs, instructional materials, publications, and professional services of the

national organizations are analyzed in terms of these prevailing rationales and federal funding sources in each of the three time periods.

McBee, R. (1993). *Demistifying [sic] Research in Education and the Social Sciences: A Primer for LRE Folks*. Unpublished paper (ERIC number: ED 381481).

McBee's article argues that the LRE community should understand education research methods better to demonstrate to policy makers and funders the value of LRE and to evaluate alternative educational strategies. The article deals with research procedures and reporting formats, quantitative and qualitative research designs, experimental and non-experimental designs, and so forth.

King, B. (1994). *Teaching for Thinking and Citizenship Education: Examining the Constitution of Student-Citizens in Secondary Social Studies*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The purpose of King's research was to examine the association between teaching for higher order thinking and the notion of a socially transformative citizenship in 12 social studies classrooms (in four secondary schools). The study found that a commitment to classroom thoughtfulness on the part of teachers did not necessarily translate into thoughtful treatment of civic content. For many teachers in this study, teaching for thinking and citizenship for the most part involved the transmission of knowledge, not higher order or critical thinking. In addition, although some teachers embraced a multicultural perspective, they tended simply to add more content about underrepresented groups to an already jam-packed curriculum. The study suggests that pedagogy appropriate to higher order thinking probably necessitates a shift away from traditional instruction in the social studies.

Wolff, R. (1994). *South Dakota Principals' Perceptions About, Attitudes Toward, and Knowledge of Law-Related and Civic Education Practices in Their Schools*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of South Dakota.

The overall purpose of the study is reflected in its title. A survey was sent to all school principals (in public and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools) and was returned by 71 percent of the recipients. The findings included the following: (1) the principals' perception of LRE well matched the goals and definitions as set by national LRE organizations; (2) their idea of civic education reflected a transmission rather than participatory model of instructional goals; (3) 84 percent believed that some form of civic/LRE was being taught in their school; (4) their teachers infrequently used specific law-related teaching strategies; (5) the principals placed more importance on teaching law and civics at high school than at the elementary level.

Wolowiec, J., ed. (1994). *LRE Research: A Status Report. Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 8*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship.

This bulletin begins with an article by David Naylor, "Research and Law-Related Education: Perceptions, Perspectives, and Possibilities," which examines five categories of questions important to LRE research. These include: (1) what is the nature and status of LRE? (2) what impact does LRE have on the lives of students? (3) what is needed to teach LRE effectively? (4) how should teachers be prepared to teach LRE? (5) what is required to get and keep LRE in school programs? In addition, Naylor explores what function research can (and must) provide. The remainder of this bulletin examines summaries of some of the LRE research in progress and proposals for several other LRE research studies.

Neisler, O. (1995). *Inside Social Studies at Castleton High: Young Citizens Discuss Their Citizenship Education*. Doctoral Dissertation. Syracuse University.

The focus of this qualitative research was on high school students' perspectives about the materials, information, activities, and interactions they experience in their social studies courses. Data were collected via classroom observations, in-depth interviews with students, analysis of classroom materials, and the school newspaper. The findings concern three areas of high school social studies (especially citizenship education). First, students reported they were bored by their social studies courses; they did not understand the purposes of these classes; they felt restricted in their discussions and explorations of current social and political problems. Second, students were in the process of changing their sociopolitical attitudes with respect to a number of issues, experiencing a process described by adolescent psychologists Ianni and Seltzer. Third, students had little knowledge about the state political structure, despite taking a participation in government course; they were cynical about the political process and generally unenthusiastic about participating in that process; and students appeared to be unaware that citizenship education is the purpose of the social studies courses they take. The study closes with a discussion of developing more engaging classrooms and the obstacles to doing so.

Cornett, J. (1996). *Portraits of Four Exemplary Law-Related Education Teachers: Insights from a Qualitative Study of Teacher Practice*. Unpublished paper. Florida Law Related Education Association.

The purpose of Cornett's research was to describe the classroom practice of four exemplary LRE teachers from the perspectives of each teacher, the researcher, and key stakeholders such as students and administrators. Two major assumptions guided the study: (1) field-based research about exemplary LRE instructional practice is limited and, therefore, preservice and inservice teacher training is not informed by carefully documented examples of such classrooms; (2) for teachers to be empowered to continue to improve their practice, they must explicitly understand the assumptions underlying their practice. The study is not only suggestive about some of the characteristics of exemplary LRE teaching, it is also noteworthy for its use of action research methods and for involving the teachers directly in the study of their own practices.

"North Carolina High School Strategy Survey." (July 1997). *Center.Link: Research Bulletin of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence* 1, no. 2. [Http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/strategy.htm](http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/strategy.htm). of the *Center for the Prevention of School Violence* 1, no. 2. [Http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/strategy.htm](http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/strategy.htm).

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence in North Carolina conducted telephone interviews with 307 high schools in the state to determine to what extent safety and security strategies recommended by the Center (School Resource Officer, law-related education, conflict management and peer mediation, Students Against Violence Everywhere [SAVE], Teen Court, and physical design and technology applications) are in place. With respect to law-related education, the interviews revealed that just over half the schools indicate LRE programs are in place. In terms of perceived effectiveness, the most common rating was a 3 (with 1 being very effective and 7 being not at all effective). On average, SROs were rated as most effective (average rating 1), followed by physical design and technology applications and Teen Court, which was only available in 10 percent of the schools (both rated 2). Other strategies rated 3 were conflict management/peer mediation and SAVE.

"School as the Beat, The." (February 1998). *Center.Link: Research Bulletin of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence* 1, no. 3. [Http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/Research_Bulletin_National.htm](http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/Research_Bulletin_National.htm).

Staff of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence in North Carolina surveyed 353 School Resource Officers attending a national conference; while not a representative sample, the survey respondents serve as the starting point for constructing a profile of SROs. With respect to SROs' role in law-related education, this survey indicated that SROs spend 17 percent of their time teaching law-related education lessons; this average reflects variation from no time spent teaching LRE (9 percent) to teaching 15 or more lessons weekly (4 percent).

Albin, Maria, and Helen Peoples. (1998). *The Effect of a Law-Related Education Course on the Attitudes of Civics Students at an Alternative High School*. Unpublished Research Paper. Bozeman, MT: Youth Imperative.

This study examined an LRE class's impact on students' attitudes in an alternative high school in a university town in a Northwestern rural state. The six-week, once weekly course was taught by two attorneys and featured presentations by outside resource persons; the course was designed to reflect the key elements of LRE identified in the CAR/SSEC study. Twenty-three students took part in the experimental class, while ten participated in the control class, a regular civics course. A 17-item attitude survey was administered before and after the LRE course. Questions asked about students' views of various professionals in the legal system (police, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys) and the law. The results indicated that experimental students' attitudes significantly improved, while control students' attitudes remained essentially the same. The greatest improvement was in attitudes toward attorneys; the least improvement was in attitudes toward laws.

Tolo, K. (1998). *An Assessment of We the People...Project Citizen: Promoting Citizen-ship in Classrooms and Communities*. Austin, TX: Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas.

This study was a formative assessment of Project Citizen, the Center for Civic Education's middle school civic action program. The assessment primarily looked at issues related to implementation, although the researchers also asked teachers and students how they thought students benefited from participating in the program. Among the findings reported was that while Project Citizen is sufficiently flexible to fit into many classroom settings, teachers face challenges in implementing the program. Teachers and students who participate in Project Citizen report liking the program and benefiting in a number of ways (e.g., increased self-efficacy, increased knowledge about and commitment to solving community problems, etc.). State coordinators also face challenges in recruiting and training teachers; these challenges revolve around limited funds, time, experience, and availability.

ABA State Project Survey Summary. (1999). Chicago, IL: American Bar Association, Division for Public Education. [Http://www.abanet.org/publiced/lre/summary.htm](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/lre/summary.htm).

The ABA surveyed the directors of state law-related education centers to determine what services they offer to LRE teachers and resource people in their states. The survey indicated that the most commonly offered programs are various kinds of staff development activities for teachers (offered by 70 percent of the respondents), mock trial competitions (64 percent), lending libraries/resource centers (47 percent), youth summits (40 percent), and lawyer in the classroom activities (36 percent). The most commonly offered products are newsletters (53 percent), mock trial scripts/scenarios (45 percent), lessons and curricula (35 percent), and brochures informing young people about their rights (20 percent). A large majority of the state centers (86 percent) had at least some relationship with their state bars.