

## **LRE at the High School Level**

Donovan, D. (1975). *Turning Students on to Active Citizenship*. Pittman, NJ: Institute for Political and Legal Education.

Donovan compared a group of students who were exposed to an LRE course with students who did not take an LRE course. Donovan found that law-related knowledge gains favored the experimental students. Donovan also explored one measure of student attitudes and found that LRE students had greater desire to become involved in government than those who did not take the course.

Denton, J., and J. Kracht. (1976). *Final Evaluation Report of Teacher Training Projects*. Unpublished Report. Dallas, TX: Law in a Changing Society.

This study compared the knowledge gains of students who took an LRE course taught by trained teachers with students who took a LRE course taught by untrained teachers. These researchers found that students taught by trained teachers learned significantly more than those whose teachers were not trained.

Nelson, E. (1979). *Final Evaluation of the "Criminal Justice in the Classroom Project."* Unpublished Report. Tempe, AZ: Tempe Union High School and the Arizona State University Center for Criminal Justice.

Nelson compared students who were exposed to LRE with others who were not so exposed. Nelson found that the LRE students had greater knowledge gains than the comparison group. Nelson also found no direct LRE program effects on high school students' attitudes.

Carroll, J., E. Nelson, and N. Eisenberg-Berg. (1980). *Law-Related Education: Assessing Adolescents' Knowledge and Attitudes*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.

Carroll and his colleagues assessed the relationships between existing levels of law-related knowledge (obtained from any source, not necessarily an LRE course) and several attitude variables among students in Arizona high schools. The researchers reported a significant negative correlation between law-related knowledge and authoritarian attitudes and a significant positive correlation between law-related knowledge and both legal-social responsibilities and educational expectations.

Fraser, B. and D. Smith. (1980). "Impact of Law-Related Education Materials on Student Cognitive and Affective Outcomes." *The Social Studies*. 71 (3): 139-42.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the impact of the High School Education Law Project (HELP) in Australian high schools (largely in Sidney). The evaluation looked at two primary student measures—cognitive and affective domains. Usable responses were obtained from 224 students in the experimental group (in nine schools) and from 96 students in a control group. Fraser and Smith found statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group on cognitive measures (with entry-level achievement controlled) on 15 of 16 cognitive measures. In addition, the evaluators found that students of higher IQ outperformed students of lower IQ on the cognitive criterion test. With respect to measures of student attitudes, the evaluators initially

found few suitable tests for the purpose relative to LRE. Thus, Fraser and Smith created their own attitude test. In the end, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on one of five attitude measures (i.e., the “influenceability of law”—the extent to which the public can influence the making and nature of laws). There were no significant differences between the two groups on the other four (i.e., judges are “normal” people; students enjoy their law studies; the law is ever-changing; the extent to which the law is understandable).

Fielding, G., E. Kameenui, and R. Gersten. (1983). “A Comparison of an Inquiry and a Direct Instruction Approach to Teaching Legal Concepts and Applications to Secondary School Students.” *Journal of Educational Research*. 76 (5): 287-93.

High school students were taught a two-week unit on the constitutional rights of youth. Five groups of students received a direct instruction treatment and five groups received an inquiry treatment. Students in the groups receiving direct instruction scored significantly higher on both a multiple-choice test and an essay test requiring the application of what was learned about constitutional principles to unfamiliar cases. On the other hand, students receiving inquiry instruction scored significantly higher on an essay test requiring the expression of personal opinions on policy issues underlying the studied cases. Furthermore, an attitude questionnaire indicated that students in the inquiry groups found the content more challenging than the students receiving direct instruction.

Harwood, A.M. (1990). *The Effects of Close Up Participation on High School Students' Political Attitudes*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Boston, April.

Harwood looked at the effects of participating in Close Up’s experiential program on high school students' attitudes toward political institutions and on their political behavior. Georgia students participating in Close Up's one-week on-site program in Washington, DC, were randomly selected for participation. The 58 experimental subjects were compared with 113 control subjects. The data indicated that the Close Up experience increased positive feelings toward government and stimulated political participation.

Ford, L. (1991). *The United States Political System: Adolescent Perceptions and the Role for Citizenship Education*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Maryland, College Park.

Ford’s research rested on the following assumption: high school civics classes have been found only marginally effective in transmitting a participatory civic culture to students and those students report that American government and politics is “boring.” As adults, therefore, these young people are likely to be citizen spectators. Her research therefore investigated the possible differences between students who completed a traditional classroom-based civics course with other students who completed a CloseUp Foundation Washington Focus Week in addition to a traditional civics course. The results indicated that the experimental group exhibited slightly higher political efficacy, lower trust of government, and were more likely to be involved in their school culture as well as in some political activities. In addition, a subsample of survey participants were interviewed and were presented with hypothetical political dilemmas. The experimental group tended to develop more complex solutions to the problems and dilemmas posed, more accurately reflecting the existing political structure. On the other hand, politics seemed to remain uninteresting to all the adolescents surveyed.

Johnson, G. (1992). *Evaluation of Street Law Classes at Four American High Schools in Germany*. Unpublished report. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, Center for Action Research.

The *Street Law* instructional program implemented in four Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS) in Germany was the focus of this study. Students taking a semester-long *Street Law* course were compared to students who did not take this course. The results favored the experimental students (i.e., the *Street Law* students) on 10 of 20 measures of knowledge and attitudes and favored the control students on **none** of these measures. Among those measures showing the largest effect sizes were (1) knowledge of the law, (2) enthusiasm toward school and classes, (3) timely preparation and completion of assignments, (4) belief that students were treated fairly in school, and (5) perceived opportunity to demonstrate competence in school.

Social Studies Development Center. (1993). *An Evaluation of the Instructional Effects of the We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution Program*. Unpublished report. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, Social Studies Development Center.

The researchers conducting this study compared high school students who studied the Constitution and Bill of Rights in government and civics classes using traditional textbooks with students participating in the We the PeopleY program and who used that program's text *With Liberty and Justice for All*. It demonstrated that students who participated in the We the PeopleY program scored significantly higher on a test of knowledge than did the students in more traditional classes. The results of this study conformed to findings of several previous studies conducted by the Educational Testing Service.

Brody, R. (1994). *Secondary Education and Political Attitudes: Examining the Effects of Political Tolerance on the We the People... Curriculum*. Unpublished paper. Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education.

Brody's study was designed to determine the degree to which civics curricula in general, and the We the PeopleY program in particular, affect students' political attitudes. Brody found that students in high school civics, government, and U.S. history classes display more political tolerance (defined as citizens' respect for the political rights and civil liberties of all people in the society, including those whose ideas they may find distasteful or abhorrent) than the average American. He also found that students in classes using all or part of the We the PeopleY curriculum were more tolerant than comparison students using other curricula because it promotes higher levels of self-confidence and the perception of fewer limits on students' own political freedoms. Finally, Brody found that among students exposed to the We the PeopleY program, those involved in the simulated congressional hearing competitions demonstrated the highest levels of political tolerance. Brody's study is also important in terms of the research conducted on political socialization and political tolerance (e.g., see Avery et al. 1992).

Butler, J. (1995). *Effect of Different Classroom Practices on the Development of Political Attitudes in High School Students*. Doctoral Dissertation. Peabody College for Teachers, Vanderbilt University.

The purpose of Butler's study was to investigate the effect of two kinds of classroom practices on the political attitudes of high school students. Specifically, Butler looked at whether there was a difference between students who studied the U.S. Constitution in traditional classrooms (i.e., those in which lecture was the dominant instructional strategy) compared to those who studied the topic in more active classrooms (i.e., those using the We the PeopleY

curriculum, small group activities, critical thinking exercises, and performance assessment). Surveys concerning attitudes about participation, efficacy, and trust were administered to students (N=176) in three high schools. One experimental group was dropped because classroom observations indicated the instruction was similar to the control classrooms. Results indicated that students in the experimental classes were more willing to participate, were more efficacious, and were more trusting of the political system. It should be noted, however, that the students in the experimental group had significantly higher grade point averages than those in the control groups. Butler also found that there were no significant differences based on gender. There were important differences based on race, especially on the scales measuring participation and efficacy. There was no difference based on race on measures of trust.

Wilson, M.W. (1998). "Law-Related Education Program for Pregnant and Parenting Teens: Program Evaluation." In *Compendium of Research Supporting Law-Related Education, Part II: Alternative Conceptions/Applications of Law-Related Education*. Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium.

The program evaluated in this study consisted of 22 one-hour seminars for pregnant and parenting teens developed by Phi Alpha Delta, the law fraternity. The goals of the program were to "demystify" the legal system, to increase the consumption of and awareness of legal services and resources available, and to increase awareness of rights and responsibilities. The program was offered at a school site in Van Nuys, California, with volunteer attorneys providing the instruction. Data was collected on 20 of the 35 girls who participated in the program during the spring semester of 1997. Data was gathered using a pre/posttest that looked at beliefs, attitudes, actual use of the legal system, and knowledge. No control group was used. Participants performed better on the posttest than on the pretest, particularly with respect to their knowledge of the law; use of the legal system and attitudes toward the law were not significantly different between pre- and posttest. The participants expressed satisfaction with the program.

Clawson, H. J., and S. Sheldon. (1998). "Teen Parents and the Law (TPAL) Program Outcome Evaluation Report." In *Compendium of Research Supporting Law-Related Education, Part II: Alternative Conceptions/Applications of Law-Related Education*. Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium.

Teen Parents and the Law is a program of Street Law, Inc. It consists of 23 lessons designed to help teen parents strengthen their families and lessen the likelihood of violence in the home and community. The program intends to develop knowledge of the law pertaining to families, improve an array of skills (communication, problem solving, family management), and help students identify appropriate community resources. The program was evaluated in six classes for parenting and pregnant teens in the Washington, DC, area; 36 students participated in the evaluation. Results indicated that knowledge of the law improved significantly from pre- to posttest. Over two-thirds of the participants also improved in four of the five skills assessed (accurately identifies problem, communicates, generates options, evaluates consequences, reaches agreement/ selects solution), improving most in the area of communication skills. The data further suggest that participants' willingness to seek assistance in solving problems increased while in the program. Teachers and students responded positively to the program, with all the teachers saying they would use the curriculum again and 80 percent of students saying they would recommend the class to others.

Soule, S. (2000). *We the People...The Citizen and the Constitution: Knowledge of and Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes by Participating Students*. Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education. ([www.civiced.org/research\\_students2000.htm](http://www.civiced.org/research_students2000.htm))

The Center for Civic Education administered a survey to 355 of the students participating at the We the People... national competition in spring 1999. The survey included multiple-choice knowledge items from the NAEP civics assessment in 1988, open-ended knowledge items from the American National Election Studies administered nationally to adults since 1952, attitude items from the Monitoring the Future study of youth's views on the political system, and attitude items from the annual survey of college freshmen. The results for the self-described "elite" sample of We the People students indicated that, in terms of their knowledge of government and the law, these students performed better on NAEP items than students in the 1988 NAEP assessment and performed better than a sample of adults who completed the National Household Education Survey in 1996. Their attitudes toward government and future participation were more positive than those of a similar subsample of students (mostly white and college-bound) who took part in the Monitoring the Future study in 1997. The We the People students also place greater importance on keeping up with political affairs, influencing the political structure, and becoming a community leader than do the national sample of college freshmen.