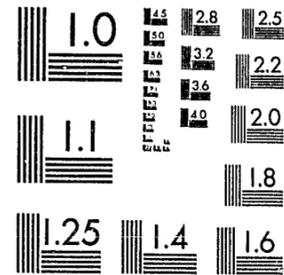


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National Institute of Justice  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20531

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# OJJDP

## Juvenile Justice Technical Assistance Bulletin

### Law Related Education

The United Nations has designated 1985 as International Youth Year (IYY) to increase public awareness of youth-related issues around the world.

In his proclamation of International Youth Year issued February 6, 1985, President Reagan wrote:

America rejoices in the energy, the imagination, and the promise of her young people . . . . Their patriotism and commitment to peace with freedom ensure a vigorous American democracy and a safer world in the years ahead.

. . . The dream of human progress through freedom is still the most revolutionary idea in the world, and it is still the most successful. It is the priceless heritage America bestows on each new generation, with the hope that succeeding generations the world over will come to better know its fruits.



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National Institute of Justice

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The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention will issue information bulletins such as this to highlight OJJDP program initiatives that relate to IYY

1985 themes. Other Federal agencies will undertake a variety of activities to celebrate International Youth Year.

**The IYY 1985 schedule and theme months are:**

January	Kickoff
February	Citizenship, leadership, and government
March	The arts
April	Total fitness, part I: emotional health, values, and volunteering
May	Total fitness, part II: enabling all youth, nutrition, exercise, and sports
June	Workplace, career development
July	Patriotism and families
August	International understanding and world concerns
September	Education
October	Agriculture and the environment
November	Families
December	Recognition; wrapup of IYY

Law Related Education makes the law accessible to youth by focusing on issues that students may experience in real life: tenant rights, consumer fraud, juvenile law, and conflicts between rights and responsibilities.

Many LRE programs take issues from the streets and use case studies and role-playing to explore them in detail. One LRE approach makes the U.S. Constitution a living document by examining how it affects the student personally as a contract between the individual and society.

Law Related Education is *not* a program to create amateur lawyers or to prepare students for law school. It instead builds citizenship and leadership skills, through education in analytic thinking and an understanding of the law. These skills enable students to apply legal principles to their daily experiences and to meet the obligations of citizenship.

By offering a forum for discussion of adult responsibilities, the LRE classroom serves as a bridge between childhood dependence and adulthood. For a decade, Cranston High School in Cranston, Rhode Island, has been offering a one-year course for seniors called "Youth and the law: legally an adult now." The program began when Rhode Island lowered its age of majority to 18, and two lawyers and several teachers created a course to emphasize law, rights, and responsibilities.

The course now has 10 or more sections each school year and enrolls half the senior class. Its civil law section covers tort law and civil procedure, consumer law, landlord-tenant law, marriage and family, civil rights, civil liberties, and employment law. Its criminal law section covers prisons, law enforcement, police work, and juvenile law.

Much of the material for the course is taken from newspaper articles and court decisions, or developed through learning exercises.

In Wisconsin, the State Bar Association has published a 13-page booklet, "On Being 18," that not only helps new adults become aware of their new rights but also helps them avoid legal problems. The booklet is distributed in schools throughout the State.

Law Related Education is too diverse a field to be implemented through any single national program model. Some LRE programs emphasize a substantive approach to law. These focus on how the legal system works and on its history. Others take a practical approach. They instruct students about their rights and responsibilities and give them practical skills for effective use of the law in their daily lives—such skills as reading contracts or spotting consumer fraud.

Still other LRE programs take a conceptual approach, teaching students such basic principles as justice,

authority, and responsibility. All LRE programs emphasize critical thinking and student involvement in the learning process.

### Law Related Education as Citizenship Education

More than just an addition to social studies, Law Related Education helps children learn to be effective citizens in a society governed by the rule of law. It fits into the general curriculum at any grade level.

In the elementary school, LRE offers students the opportunity to learn about the underlying principles of law, the legal system, and government. Children explore their feelings about their relationships to others. Children's literature is often used as a source for classroom discussions.

In the secondary school, an LRE component becomes a natural enrichment to the required government or history course. But LRE can do more. Some schools have designed "magnet" courses in the law for particularly legal-minded students. And as a general elective, LRE teaches not only about the law but also about decision-making in a democracy—and effective citizenship.

### Law Related Education and Delinquency Prevention

If teaching Law Related Education can encourage good citizenship, can it discourage bad citizenship? Can LRE help reduce delinquent behavior?

According to an evaluation of secondary LRE programs conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 1981, well developed LRE programs can reduce

## Analytical ability can reduce the perceived need to resort to violence to solve conflicts.

student tendencies to resolve issues by violence, reduce dependence on delinquent peers, enhance understanding of the legal system, and develop more healthy attitudes toward the legal system.

In each of the 75 sites studied in the evaluation, LRE students demonstrated substantially greater knowledge of the legal system than did students in the comparison group. Several classes showed a measurable decline in behaviors known to be correlates of delinquency, such as association with delinquent peers.

A 1983 followup evaluation defined six features of a well designed LRE program:

- Adequate preparation and use of outside resource persons.
- Adequate quality and quantity of instruction.
- Judicious selection and presentation of illustrative material.
- Strategies for affecting friendship choices through student interaction.
- Involvement of the school building administrators.
- Opportunities for professional peer support for teachers.

Law Related Education can be an effective part of a community effort to reduce juvenile crime by giving young people confidence in the criminal justice system.

In many schools, drugs, vandalism, theft, and violence against both students and teachers have destroyed the orderly atmosphere needed for teaching and learning. While juvenile criminal behavior, both in school and elsewhere, is caused by a large and complex set of sociological and psychological conditions, there is evidence that a better understanding of the legal foundations of society leads to a decline among youth in apathy, cynicism, anger, and delinquent behavior.

### Law Related Education, the Community, and OJJDP

Law Related Education has had the valuable side effect of developing a network of lay persons and professionals, public and private institutions and organizations, who now share interests not only in LRE but also in other youth-related fields.

OJJDP's LRE National Training and Dissemination Program helps further develop this LRE resource network, thus adding to the vitality of local LRE programs. OJJDP and its associated LRE groups can provide newsletters, teaching-learning materials, teacher training programs, and guidance toward winning community funding. Technical assistance is available in:

- Organizing school resource programs using the volunteer services of

judges, lawyers, law students, and justice agency personnel.

- Designing student and teacher internships in justice agencies, such as the police or the courts.
- Planning and staffing teacher in-service training.
- Organizing peer teaching programs in law-related education.

With the technical assistance of OJJDP's LRE program initiative, and with the dedication of the local schools and populace to making LRE an asset to their communities, an effective and economical program can be implemented in any educational setting.

OJJDP's initiative has three parts:

- Assessing the critical steps necessary to institutionalize LRE as a permanent part of the educational curriculum, including maximizing the involvement and support of key professional and community groups.
- Expanding the evaluation of LRE's impact in reducing juvenile delinquency and in promoting students' legal literacy and civic competence, by involving a larger sample of students and grade levels.
- Continuing to provide technical assistance to States and localities, through a network of programs established in 1976, and working closely with a variety of legal, educational, governmental, and community groups.

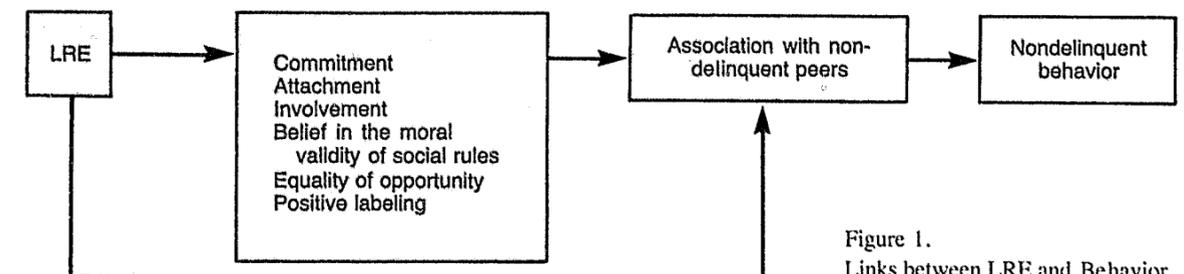


Figure 1. Links between LRE and Behavior

### "The Fourth 'R': Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship"

Addressing the Indiana Law Related Education meeting in Indianapolis on February 22, Alfred S. Regnery, Administrator of OJJDP, said:

*I submit that if we are a nation at risk in terms of our knowledge of technology and science, we are also a democracy at risk in terms of our political illiteracy, our ignorance of the Constitution, and our ignorance of the structure on which our society is built . . . .*

*The ignorance of America's youth regarding the Constitution and our political framework . . . can be at least partially alleviated by the Law Related Education program.*

### Information and Participants

Information about the LRE evaluation is available by writing to:

LRE Evaluation Project  
Box 3578  
Boulder, CO 80308

or by calling the project director,  
Robert Hunter, (303) 443-7977.

Program Coordinator for the LRE  
National Training and Dissemination  
Program is:

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Participants in the project include:

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### Suggested Readings

1. **Measurement of Law-Related Attitudes.** By S.B. Palonsky and M.R. Jacobson. 7 p. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, V6, N1 (Winter 1982), p. 22-28. NCJ 90124
2. **Directory of Law-Related Education Projects.** By J.M. Koprowski. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. 1982: 159 p. Availability: American Bar Association, Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, 1155 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637. NCJ 89573
3. **Building Bridges to the Law—How to Make Lawyers, Judges, Police and Other Members of the Community a Part of Your Law-Related Education Program.** By C. White. Sponsored by The Anderson Foundation. 1981: 272 p. Availability: American Bar Association, Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship, 1155 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637. NCJ 87950
4. **Evaluation of Law-Related Education Programs, Phase II.** By M.J. Turner. 1981: 775 p. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Assistance, Research, and Statistics. Availability: NCJRS Document Loan Program, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850. NCJ 84210
5. **Alternatives to Apathy—Law-Related Education Programs for Young People.** American Bar Association, Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship. 19 p. Availability: NCJRS Microfiche Program, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850. NCJ 64717
6. **Law-Related Education.** 12 p. Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. Availability: free from NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850. NCJ 61127

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