

Law Related Education *Overview*



What Is LRE?

Law related education is an amalgam of programs, curricula, training, presentations, and technical assistance provided through the Law Related Education (LRE) Office at the South Carolina Bar. LRE teaches students about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It provides students with active learning opportunities that foster their understanding of the role of law in a democratic society. Students learn about laws, the legal system, and how both affect their lives. LRE also stresses the use of outside resource people and the application of LRE to real life situations. These programs increase critical thinking and problem solving skills; they help students learn about consequences and identifying alternatives to difficult situations; they build more resilient youth; they empower youth. And, most programs are available K-12.

The LRE Office also provides numerous training opportunities throughout the year for teachers, administrators, SROs, and interested others on each of the LRE programs. Classroom materials are provided, and most all of the trainings are free. Members of the LRE staff are also available to travel and provide a variety of different trainings and presentations as requested.

All LRE curricula have been correlated to the South Carolina social studies state standards, and those correlations, along with lots of other LRE information, are available on the LRE link at the SC Bar website. For more information, call (803) 252-5139, or visit the LRE link at the SC Bar website at www.scbar.org.

Awards and Recognitions

Each year, one school is selected as LRE School of the Year. This school can be elementary, middle, or high, and is chosen based on their

implementation of LRE curricula and/or programs and commitment to the principles of LRE. This school receives a scholarship of \$5,000 for use as they wish.

High School Mock Trial seniors have the opportunity to apply for a one-time \$500.00 Mock Trial scholarship to assist with higher education costs.

The winner of the Statewide *High School Mock Trial* competition is fully sponsored to compete in the National High School Mock Trial Competition, which is held in a different state each year.

The winner of the Statewide *Project Citizen* competition has their portfolio displayed at the National Conference of State Legislators, and is awarded a recognition of excellence.

The statewide winner of the *We the People...The Citizen and the Constitution* competition is fully sponsored to compete in the National We the People competition which is held in Washington, D. C.

LRE Training

LRE Staff provide training throughout the year on many of the programs available through the LRE office.

- There are one-day workshops on We The People...The Citizen and the Constitution and Middle School Mock Trial, and Community Works;
- There are two-day workshops on Project Citizen, Community Works, and Street Law;
- There is a three-day trainings on Foundations of Democracy;
- And there are weeklong institutes on Conflict Management and Peer Mediation, and We The People...The Citizen and the Constitution.

Other trainings can be made available upon request.

To be added to the mailing list for training announcements, call the **LRE office at 803-252-5139.**

LRE Programs Overview

Mock Trial

Mock Trial serves to provide students with an opportunity to practice and refine their debate and acting skills, along with allowing them to learn about courtroom procedure, decorum, and rules of law. Several weeks ahead of time, students are presented with a case and must learn to prosecute and defend the case. They must also practice playing the parts of witnesses for the case. Then, students come to the competition and are judged on how they do all of the above as compared to other teams. There is a statewide winner, and that team goes to the national competition. There are Mock Trial teams in middle schools and high schools, many Middle School Mock Trial participants going on to participate in High School Mock Trial. Many Mock Trial participants express significant learning from the experience, and many cite the experience as one element that helped them choose a career in law or a related field.

We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution

The foundation of the **We the People...** program is the classroom curriculum. It complements the regular school curriculum by providing upper elementary, middle, and high school students with an innovative course of instruction on the history and principles of constitutional democracy in the United States. The **We the People...** textbooks are designed for a wide range of student abilities and may be used as a supplemental text or for a full semester of study.

Critical thinking exercises, problem-solving activities, and cooperative learning techniques help develop intellectual and participatory skills while increasing students' understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy. The We the People... curriculum fosters attitudes that are necessary for students to participate as effective, responsible citizens. After studying the textbook, students take a multiple-choice test and prepare for the simulated congressional hearing. Upon completion of the course, they receive a certificate of achievement signed by their member of Congress or other prominent official. The culminating activity is a simulated congressional hearing in which students "testify" before a panel of judges. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and have opportunities to evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues.

We the People... Project Citizen **We the People... Project Citizen** is a civic education program for middle school students that promotes competent and responsible participation in state and local government. It actively engages students in learning how to monitor and influence public policy and encourages civic participation among students, their parents, and members of the community.

As a class project, students work together to identify and study a public policy issue, eventually developing an action plan for implementing their policy. The final product is a portfolio displaying each group's work.

In a culminating activity the class presents its portfolio in a simulated legislative hearing, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of how public policy is formulated. Classes may also be able to enter their portfolios in a local competition with other classes. Local winners

submit their portfolios for a statewide competition, and state winners go on to be evaluated in the Project Citizen national finals.

Youth Courts

Youth Courts are a form of diversion program that utilizes positive peer pressure as its primary mode of operation. They can be implemented in a variety of forms, but in all forms, youth serve to hear charges and impose a disposition. Most all utilize a form of jury that deliberates over the disposition, and most all require community service and assignment of jury duty as absolute minimum sanctions. Dispositions are imposed according to the severity of the crime, the circumstances surrounding it, and the attitude of the offender. Adults are involved in some varieties of Youth Courts to varying degrees, including serving as the intake officer, judge, or tribunal member, the tribunal functioning as a judge and jury. However, many Youth Courts use almost no adults. The benefit of involving the youth, both offenders and volunteers, are many-fold. In addition to those mentioned above, they aid in learning about the legal system, they increase respect for the law, and they emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions by the use of positive peer pressure.

Foundations of Democracy

The **Foundations of Democracy Series** consists of curricular materials for use with students from kindergarten through twelfth grade on four concepts fundamental to an understanding of politics and government: Authority, Privacy, Responsibility, and Justice. This multidisciplinary curriculum draws upon such fields as political philosophy, political science, law, history, literature, and environmental studies.

Community Works

Community Works is a curriculum produced by the national Teens, Crime, and the Community (TCC) program. It combines education and action to reduce teen victimization and to involve youth in their communities. It provides highly interactive activities like role plays, group discussions, and skits to build leadership and communication skills. The program was written for the layperson, so even non-teachers find it easy to implement. It culminates in a community service project that is planned, designed, and implemented by youth. It also includes step-by-step lesson plans are designed for instructors who have limited time for lesson planning.

*** All LRE curricula have been correlated to SC State Social Studies Curriculum Standards.