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ABSTRACT

Simply put, human rights education is learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights. Growing consensus around the world recognizes education for and about human rights as essential. It can contribute to the building of free, just, and peaceful societies. Human rights education also is increasingly recognized as an effective strategy to prevent human rights abuses. Starting in April 2000, surveys, which were developed through consultation with human rights educators across the nation, were mailed to a select sample of 120 knowledgeable persons in state education, asking them to respond to questions about the level of inclusion of human rights topics within their state policies. This initial analysis of data is based on surveys returned from all 50 states. The first survey question asked whether the respondent's state had statewide mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies for human rights education. The only data reviewed here are from those states responding in the affirmative (40% of the states) If the belief is that there is a role for human rights and/or peace education within the K-12 school curriculum, then it is both useful and relevant to understand to what extent the states are already complying. Through this initial survey, findings suggest that while progress has been made, there is still a long road ahead. Issues arise as to conflicting definitions and vocabulary, enforcement, and assessment. And no mandate can assure student learning without the active involvement of the classroom teacher. That is the next and most important level of this study. (Contains 26 references. Appended are state responses.) (BT)

*What is the state of human rights education in K-12 schools in the United States in 2000?:
A preliminary look at the National Survey of Human Rights Education*

presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting,
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Introduction:

What is human rights education (HRE)? What actually are human rights? Human rights have been defined as "generally accepted principles of fairness and justice" or "the universal moral rights that belong equally to all people simply because they are human beings" or "the basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity" (O'Brien, 1996; Flowers, 1998). Simply put, human rights education is all learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights. The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) has defined human rights education as:

training, dissemination, and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes which are directed to:

- (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) The promotion of understanding, respect, gender equality, and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society;
- (e) The furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the Maintenance of Peace."

(Adapted from the Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), paragraph 2)

Education in human rights is itself a fundamental human right and also a responsibility: the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) exhorts "every individual and every organ of society" to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." Although news reports refer to human rights every day, human rights literacy is not widespread in the United States. Students of law and international relations or political science may study human rights in a university setting, but most people receive no education, formally or informally, about human rights. Even human rights activists usually acquire their knowledge and skills by self-teaching and direct experience. People who do not know their rights are more vulnerable to having them abused and often lack the language and conceptual framework to effectively advocate for them. Growing consensus around the world recognizes education for and about human rights as essential. It can contribute to the building of free, just, and peaceful societies. Human rights education is also increasingly recognized as an effective strategy to prevent human rights abuses.

In the 2000 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the mid-term global evaluation of the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, human rights education is seen to:

involve more than the provision of information and should constitute a comprehensive life-long process by which people at all levels in development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies." (p.4)

Further discussions of the main achievements and obstacles during the first half of the Decade reveal that over the past five years a large number of countries has incorporated HRE in pre-school, primary and secondary curricula, either as a cross curricular theme, an optional course or as "attainment targets" in the overall curriculum. In many countries there is also a continuous stream of activities regarding human rights issues, initiated by human rights NGOs and individual schools and teachers (Elbers, 2000).

For example:

- As part of the National Plan of Action, the Croatian government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and teacher training institutes organized a series of seminars for teachers and principals, developed text books and manuals in order to introduce human rights education as a cross curricular theme and an optional subject in all kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools.
- In Austria a special Service Centre for Human Rights Education supported by the Austrian government was established as part of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education. The HRE Service Centre offers training courses and an advisory service for teachers and others engaged in HRE activities; it also develops educational materials and is actively creating an information network among Austrian teachers.
- The 50th anniversary of the UDHR led to numerous media and public awareness campaigns in many countries in 1998. A large number of web sites were created to celebrate and make people aware of the UDHR. Often these activities were not part of a national plan of action.
- In Belgium a NGO specializing in HRE was created, specifically to promote the Decade.
- In Rosario (Argentina), Nagpur (India) and Thies (Senegal) so-called Sustainable Human Rights Communities were established, in an attempt to create communities world-wide that are guided by human rights in all relevant aspects of life. The entire population undertakes to examine traditional beliefs, collective memory and aspirations as related to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, the community's governing bodies, institutions and local groups learned about human rights as related to their functions to assure that the community's development plans maintain the dignity and serve the well-being of all its members.
- A massive human rights education project was initiated in Cambodia by NGOs, in full co-operation with the Ministry of Education and with funding from UN agencies and other donors. The Human Rights Teaching Methodology project aims to train all of Cambodia's 71,000 teachers in how best to teach human rights to their students. The project started in 1995, and by July 2000, 30,000 of the target of 71,000 had been achieved.
- The model of teacher training in the Human Rights Teaching Project in Cambodia could

be introduced in other countries of South East Asia. The training covers international laws and standards with traditional Khmer and Buddhist values using participative learner-centered methodology.

Missing from this discussion is any involvement from the United States, except in the instances of NGOs or human rights organizations that are headquartered here. Human rights education in K-12 schools is not mentioned. There has been movement, however. Several state legislatures have begun to address this concern by enacting mandates for various levels of human rights education within their schools. The New York State legislature in 1995 amended its Education Law with regard to instruction on human rights violations, genocide, slavery, the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland. A review of programming at recent Annual Meetings of the National Council for the Social Studies indicates a growing number of presentations on the broad topic of human rights education. What does not exist is a formal comprehensive study of what is happening across the nation in this area. Ed O'Brien, Executive Director of Street Law, recently stated:

I believe there is little HRE in U.S. schools because of how difficult it is to change curriculum in the U.S., which only takes place on the state and local school board and individual school levels. More importantly, the concept of human rights is not yet part of the culture as it relates to issues inside the U.S.--human rights violations are thought of as something occurring in other countries not inside the U.S. (O'Brien, 2000).

Perspective:

Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan in his message for Human Rights Day 2000 concluded that:

We still have a long way to go. Only a few countries have developed effective national strategies for human rights education. There is a big gap between the promises made under the Decade and the resources actually committed. ... Why is human rights education so important? Because, as it says in the constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.' The more people know their own rights, and the more they respect those of others, the better the chance that they will live together in peace. Only when people are educated about human rights can we hope to prevent human rights violations, and thus prevent conflict, as well."

This connection between human rights education and peace education can be linked directly to the first sentence of the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and *peace* in the world" (1948, p.1). Reardon (1997), sees human rights education as a necessary and useful complement to peace education that is "essential to the development of peacemaking capacities and should be integrated into all forms of peace education. It is through human rights education that learners are provided with the knowledge and opportunities for specific corrective action that can fulfill the prescriptive requirements of education for peace" (p.22). Human rights concepts and principles have a role

not only in conflict resolution but of all aspects and phases of a peace making process. Human rights education teaches the “concepts of dignity and justice that identify and acknowledge social wrongs and cultural faults, as the guidelines through which societies can conceptualize and pursue cultural change, and as the impetus to governmental action to defend the dignity of citizens” (p. 29).

Methodology:

A survey was developed through consultation with human rights educators across the nation modeled after the “National Survey of Economic Education” completed by the National Council on Economic Education, May 1999. The survey was conducted to determine the degree to which HRE has been integrated into statewide mandates, standards, and/or frameworks for K-12 instruction. Starting in April, 2000, surveys were mailed to a select sample of 120 knowledgeable persons (state education curriculum specialists and officers of state councils for the social studies), asking them to respond to questions about the level of inclusion of human rights topics within their state policies. Multiple responses from a single state (when available) provided a means to validate responses. Follow-up contacts with the original sample and additional participants were made over the ensuing months to ensure that responses were received from every state. This initial analysis of the data is based on surveys returned from all 50 states.

Within the survey, human rights education was defined as all learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights (including civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights). The specific label HRE may not be used, but the content should still be present. This was intended to differentiate between *historical* events that might be considered to have a human rights connection (the Holocaust, Armenian genocide, slavery, Irish Famine) and the *behaviors and dispositions* that support human rights. Including the former without the latter is not human rights education.

Survey questions included:

- Does your state have statewide mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies for human rights education?
- At what grade levels do the statewide mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies apply?
- Name the subject area where the human rights education is included.
- Is there a developmental approach used in your human rights education which involves the addition of more abstract understandings of human rights concepts as students progress through the grades?
- Are schools in your state required to implement the statewide human rights education standards, guidelines, or proficiencies?
- Are specific curriculum topics addressed within your human rights education mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies?
- Do statewide assessments measure whether students meet the statewide human rights education standards, guidelines, or proficiencies?

- (For states with no mandate) Are human rights concepts/understandings integrated within or across the curriculum in the schools in your state even though you have no mandate, standards, proficiencies, or guidelines for human rights education?

Results:

[Note: For the purposes of this report, the only data being reviewed is from those states who responded in the affirmative to the first question on the survey-- Does your state have statewide mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies for human rights education? Data from those states responding in the negative will be reviewed in a subsequent paper.]

1. Forty percent (20) of the states studied indicate that human rights education is within the state mandated curriculum. The specific terminology of where this mandates lies varies greatly. Fourteen of these states (AZ, CA, FL, GA, KS, LA, MD, MN, MT, NJ, NM, NY, OH, VT) indicate that human rights education is part of their state standards; CT, IN, MA, NJ, and NY list legislative mandates or resolutions; KY refers to Guidelines, TX has the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), OH has Model Guidelines and Proficiencies. Those states with the most comprehensive human rights education within state curricula include Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, and Vermont.

- Georgia's *Quality Core Curriculum Standards* (1999) include statements such as
- Discusses human rights issues in various countries in the world.
- Analyzes the difficulty of developing and enforcing international standards of human rights.
- Analyzes the phenomenon of genocide in the 20th century (Armenia, Nazi holocaust, ethnic cleansing).

Kansas (1999) calls on students in 11th grade World History to "analyze the role of ideology, nationalism, religion, and the struggle for human rights in regional conflicts."

Maryland in its School Performance Assessment Program-Learner Outcomes (2000) for grade 8 calls for students to:

demonstrate attainment of understandings and attitudes needed to secure a reasoned commitment to human dignity, justice and democratic processes; analyze beliefs and values associated with a commitment to the rule of law; using a variety of cultural and ethnic contexts, analyze situations illustrating conflicts between conscience and respect for authority; using a variety of cultural and ethnic contexts, analyze situations in which individuals; demonstrate respect and support for the rights and dignity of all peoples; and analyze situations from a variety of historical contexts in which respect for majority rule and rights of the individual is demonstrated.

New Mexico (2000) has a Content Standard that states: "Students will know and understand the role of global connections and interdependence between and among individuals, groups, societies, and nations." To measure attainment of that standard, benchmarks are set for the various grade levels.

(K-4) D. Explore issues of human rights.

1. Identify examples of discrimination in literature.
2. Identify and list basic human rights.

(5-8) D. Examine the complexity of human rights issues.

1. Research issues and present recommendations for solving problems related to the quality of human life in different parts of the world.
2. Hypothesize on causes and consequences of persistent contemporary issues and prepare possible solutions.

(9-12) D. Evaluate the concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights and their impact on public policy.

1. Analyze how and why the Nazi regime perpetrated a "war against the Jews" and describe the devastation suffered by Jews and other groups in the Nazi Holocaust.
2. Explore and trace the use of ethnic cleansing throughout history.

Ohio's state standards (1999) revolve around several themes. The "citizenship rights and responsibilities" and "democratic processes" themes include mentions of human rights related concepts. The 7th grade mentions the concepts of individual rights and freedoms as well as tolerance and integrity. The 10th grade discusses the Holocaust plus calls on students to "place the development of individual rights in the US during the twentieth century in the context of international human rights"(p. 89).

Vermont (1999) contains direct mention of HRE in standards 6.12 which calls upon students to "identify and evaluate the concept of human rights in various times in their local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations world wide."

Five states (CT, IN, MA, NJ, NY) have legislative resolutions to include aspects of human rights within the education law of the state. In several instances, these mandates are in a very focused area that falls solely within the definition of historical human rights education such as the CT legislation to provide guidance in teaching about the Holocaust and Irish famine or IN resolutions for multicultural (1991) and Holocaust (1995) education. On the other hand, other state legislatures have broadened the scope of the mandate to include both historical and behavioral issues. The NY legislation mandates instruction in "human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery, the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850..." The NJ legislation indicates that instruction on the Holocaust and genocides shall take place throughout the elementary and secondary curriculum. This instruction "shall enable pupils to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; to understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; and to understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life." The MA legislature in 1998 directed its Department of Education to formulate guidelines for the teaching of genocide and human rights issues, which resulted in the June, 1999 publication of the *Massachusetts Guide to Choosing and Using Curricular Materials on Genocide and Human Rights Issues*.

2. Of the states with standards and/or mandates not all require that they be implemented in the schools. Nine states consider their mandate to be only a guideline or suggestion, leaving it up to the individual districts to choose whether to implement. Those who replied that the human rights mandate was required are GA, KY, LA, MA, MD, MN, NJ, NY, OH, SD, and TX.

3. The vast majority of states (90%) consider their mandate to extend to all grade levels. Only SD and NY did not. In NY, the legislative mandate is tied to an age (8+) rather than grade level. In SD, the mandate is only for high school. In all cases, the states see this mandate being met through the social studies curriculum, with a few states also indicating English language arts and/or other disciplines.

4. The question regarding the developmental nature of the HRE was problematic for many respondents. Either they did not know or left it blank. Those who did respond, found the standards/mandates to be developmental in nature. Students begin with concepts of self and community (referred to in several instances as "core democratic values") and grow into more intense human rights topics.

5. When asked to specify curriculum topics within HRE, the most frequently cited were the Holocaust, Irish Famine, genocide, slavery, and current issues. In many states, however, the issues are not specifically delineated.

6. Assessments drive curriculum in most states. Half of the states indicated that the human rights mandate is reflected in their statewide assessment structure. Several others indicated that no such test exists, but is "under construction" and the resulting product will include human rights.

7. Of the 30 states indicating that they have no human rights mandate, eighteen (60%) also indicate that there is no pattern of integration of human rights education in their schools. Twelve (40%) of these non-mandate states, however, indicate integration into the K-12 curriculum through the social studies. Several of the states in the non-mandate category refer to the issue of community control in being unable to clearly define if any policy is in place across all schools in the state.

Conclusions:

If one believes that there is a role for human rights and/or peace education within the K-12 school curriculum, then it is both useful and relevant to understand to what extent the states are already complying. Through this initial survey, it is possible to determine that while progress has been made, there is still a long road ahead. Issues arise as to conflicting definitions and vocabulary, enforcement, and assessment. Most importantly, what is actually happening in the classrooms of the United States? No mandate in the world can assure student learning without the active involvement of the classroom teacher. That is the next and most important level of this study.

When activists, the media, politicians, teachers, students and others in everyday life begin to refer to such problems in the U.S. as racism, women's issues, children's rights, poverty, police brutality, international trade, unemployment, the death penalty and gun control as

human rights issues, we will see a shift in perspective. We must all learn that human rights abuses are not just something that occur in far away places-they are happening right here at home-they are happening in our own backyard. At different stages of our lives, we are all victims and perpetrators of human rights abuse.

To bring about this change in U.S. culture, those promoting HRE must focus on changing the language so that people begin to use the words "human rights" in their everyday lives. In this way, the language of human rights will be incorporated into our culture and thoughts. Only then will problems like education and health care begin to be framed as human rights issues. Only then will we be able to change what is principally "a legal and constitutional law culture" to a system of laws and a constitution based on human rights. Only then will people in the U.S.A. see the need for HRE. (O'Brien, 2000)

Only then will Human Rights Education attain its rightful place within the K-12 curriculum.

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Appendix L

State responses that indicate the inclusion of human rights education.

- AZ** no direct mention evident in state standards, some historical mention of Holocaust
- CA** no direct mention, but covers human rights violations in historical context: Armenia, Holocaust, etc
- CT** legislative mandate to teach about Holocaust and Irish Famine
- FL** Not explicitly in the "Sunshine State Standards"
- GA** Quality Core Curriculum Standards
Grade 9-12 : Social Studies
Course 15: Current Issues
Topic: World Conflict
Standard: Discusses human rights issues in various countries in the world.
- Course 24: U. S. and World Affairs
Topic: Human Rights
Standard: Analyzes the difficulty of developing and enforcing international standards of human rights.
- Course 23: World History
Topic: Human Rights
Standard: Analyzes the phenomenon of genocide in the 20th century
-Armenian
-Nazi holocaust, and
-ethnic cleansing (Balkan, African, and Asian).
- IN** Holocaust and Multicultural Ed only
- KS** mention of Holocaust and "core civic values", "rights, privileges, responsibilities" but includes specific mention within 11th grade World History benchmark and indicators: analyze the role of ideology, nationalism, religion, and the struggle for human rights in regional conflicts, including mention of UDHR
- KY** reference to Human Dignity in standards at middle and high school level, not direct HRE
- LA** social studies standard C-1D-H1
evaluating and defending positions on issues regarding the personal, political, and economic rights of citizens
- MA** legislation: mandating "recommendations on curricular materials on genocide and human rights issues". Topics include: slave trade, Irish hunger, Armenian genocide, holocaust, Mussolini fascist regime and other "recognized human rights violations and genocides."
- MD** School Performance Assessment Program-Learner Outcomes grade 8
#7 Understandings and Attitudes
Students will demonstrate attainment of understandings and attitudes needed to secure a reasoned commitment to human dignity, justice and democratic processes.
Analyze beliefs and values associated with a commitment to the rule of law.

Using a variety of cultural and ethnic contexts, analyze situations illustrating conflicts between conscience and respect for authority.

Using a variety of cultural and ethnic contexts, analyze situations in which individuals demonstrate respect and support for the rights and dignity of all peoples.

Analyze situations from a variety of historical contexts in which respect for majority rule and rights of the individual is demonstrated.

MN Term not used. Emphasis on civic responsibility, improving community, understanding/resolving conflict, understanding diversity (pre service "human relations" component)

MT no direct mention in standards

NJ holocaust mandate from legislature, human rights in NJ state social studies Core Curriculum Content Standards

(EXCERPTED FROM STANDARD 6.3)

Cumulative Progress Indicators, by the end of Grade 4, students:

4. Explain issues, standards, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades, by the end of Grade 8, students:

8. Understand issues, standards, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades, by the end of Grade 12, students:

14. Analyze and formulate policy statements demonstrating an understanding of issues, standards, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

(EXCERPTED FROM STANDARD 6.4)

Cumulative Progress Indicators. By the end of Grade 4, students:

4. Identify events when people have engaged in cruel and inhumane behavior.

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades, by the end of Grade 8, students:

8. Understand how historical and contemporary ideas, perceptions, and occurrences have led to prejudice, discrimination, expulsion, genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust.

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades, by the end of Grade 12, students:

13. Evaluate actions an individual, group, or institution might take to counteract incidents of prejudice, discrimination, expulsion, genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust.

NM Content Standard 14: Students will know and understand the role of global connections and interdependence between and among individuals, groups, societies, and nations.

(<http://sde.state.nm.us/divisions/learningservices/schoolprogram/standards/csnb.html>)

Benchmarks:

(K-4) D. Explore issues of human rights.

1. Identify examples of discrimination in literature.

2. Identify and list basic human rights.

(5-8) D. Examine the complexity of human rights issues.

1. Research issues and present recommendations for solving problems related to the quality of human life in different parts of the world.
2. Hypothesize on causes and consequences of persistent contemporary issues and prepare possible solutions.

(9-12) D. Evaluate the concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights and their impact on public policy.

1. Analyze how and why the Nazi regime perpetrated a "war against the Jews" and describe the devastation suffered by Jews and other groups in the Nazi Holocaust.

2. Explore and trace the use of ethnic cleansing throughout history

NY legislative mandate, instruction in "human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery, the Holocaust, and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850..." As well as within State Learning Standards for US History, World History, and Civics.

OH thematic as "citizenship rights and responsibilities" and "democratic processes"

7th grade mention of individual rights and freedoms

tolerance/integrity

10th grade Holocaust plus "place the development of individual rights in the US during the twentieth century in the context of international human rights

SD no direct mention, discusses "rights and responsibilities of being a citizen"

TX no direct mention in standards or grid

VT direct mention of human rights in standards 6.12 Students identify and evaluate the concept of human rights in various times in their local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations world wide. This is evident when students:

PreK-4 Identify and compare how various communities (e.g. classroom, school) have defined human rights.

5-8 Evaluate the impact of social choices (e.g. efforts to end hunger, finance health care, defend homelands) on human rights; and explain the importance to the individual and to society of personal rights (e.g. freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of movement and residence).

9-12 Identify and evaluate how individual and group action promote or deny human rights; and Compare and contrast various statements about human rights (e.g. U.S. Bill of Rights, Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and examine their current impact.



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