

LAW-RELATED EDUCATION

Background

Law-related education (LRE) is an integral part of virtually all state bar associations, along with many of the larger metropolitan bar organizations throughout the nation. The goal of these programs is to provide teachers with the background, training and materials needed to help them convey to their students an understanding of the justice system and the rule of law, as well as the role all citizens play in furthering the administration of justice.

On the national scene, the American Bar Association's Division for Public Education promotes and facilitates education about law, the legal system, and the role of law in society among college and university students, with special emphasis on undergraduates. The division also develops, promotes and supports LRE programs to prepare elementary, middle and secondary students for effective and responsible citizenship, committed to liberty, justice, equal protection, and the rule of law. Through the division's website, teachers can download, for classroom use, free lessons on a variety of topics. The division also has information on careers in the law for young people, as well as other programs, resources and activities for young people interested in learning about legal issues and public policy matters.

Missouri Bar Activities

The Missouri Bar's law-related education program is the most prominent LRE organization in Missouri, and has a national reputation for its effectiveness in reaching hundreds of teachers and thousands of students. Part of that reputation is based on the far-ranging law-related education programs that the bar coordinates. Teachers at all grade levels know The Missouri Bar as a source of support, lessons and resources for preparing students to become knowledgeable and active citizens who understand the role of our courts and laws.

The Missouri Bar has received more than a quarter million dollars in grants to host and coordinate *We the People* Midwest Regional Training. At this weeklong institute, teachers from across the Midwest learn about government and law from leading authorities. To participate, the teachers must agree that when they return to their classes, they will prepare students to participate in *We the People* competitions. This involves helping high school students study a curriculum that familiarizes them with the Constitution, how government works, and historic Supreme Court decisions. The *We the People* competition also prepares students to speak to groups and to defend their thinking.

The Missouri Bar sponsors the state's *We the People* competition, where judges of the Supreme Court of Missouri, legislators and lawyers serve as judges, critiquing each team's performance at mock legislative hearing. With the support of The Missouri Bar's Young Lawyers' Section, the winning team is sent to Washington, D.C. to participate in the national competition.

The Advisory Committee on Citizenship Education oversees the bar's LRE program. This group is comprised of civics educators and lawyers, working together to improve citizenship education. Each year, this committee conducts a major spring conference that attracts 100 or more teachers.

Many of these teachers rely on the bar's law-related education video lending library for contemporary videos that explain constitutional issues and our system of government.

Other LRE programs that The Missouri Bar sponsors or coordinates include: Project Citizen, a civic education program for middle school students; the Outstanding Missouri Citizens Awards, which recognizes 15 high school students; the 4-H judicial track, held each year in Jefferson City; and the Missouri YMCA Youth in Government Program. In addition, the bar's law-related education director presents training sessions for social studies departments throughout Missouri.