

Expand and Deepen Law Related Education In Michigan

A Plan for the State Bar's Role

Spring 2009

The Michigan constitution begins with the premise that education is necessary to good government. Educated citizens are, not surprisingly, better citizens.

Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly, March 31, 2009

WHAT IS LAW RELATED EDUCATION?

Law related education (LRE) is education to equip non-lawyers with knowledge and skills pertaining to the law, the legal process, and the legal system, and the fundamental principles and values on which these are based. Law-Related Education Act of 1978

BACKGROUND

This plan for expanding and deepening LRE in Michigan has been developed using a review of leading practices nationally, the 2005 State of Civic Education in Michigan educator survey and the feedback of the more than fifty participants of the LRE Working Summit held in East Lansing in March 2009.

RECOMMENDED GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In support of broadening and deepening law related education in Michigan, we recommend that the State Bar of Michigan use appropriate Bar committees and groups to guide the following goals and strategies.

1. Develop and support an online LRE clearinghouse for use by local and specialty bars, individual lawyers and educators to access quality materials and tools for LRE. Include:
 - a. a statewide resource list, including a summary of LRE programs and services and a list of existing partnerships and collaborations supporting LRE within Michigan (MSBF, MCCE, etc)
 - b. integrated diversity pipeline strategies for current LRE activities
 - c. high quality LRE materials that, when necessary, have been customized for Michigan
 - d. research on the kinds of LRE activities that are most effective (6 Promises, et al)
 - e. links to relevant websites nationally
 - f. tools to connect lawyers and educators
 - g. strategies and resources to connect LRE professionals and the legal community with untapped resources, (i.e. police and probation officers, social workers, houses of faith, community centers, etc)
 - h. simple tools to guide meaningful LRE program evaluation
2. Build needed lawyer-educator relationships; generate partnerships and collaborations.
 - a. Provide structure, incentives and recognition to encourage participation in LRE. (i.e. Offer LRE as “A Lawyer Helps” community service opportunities, integrate LRE into State Bar committee and other work where appropriate, use media to highlight LRE volunteers)
 - b. Use Bar communications to educate and engage wider community of attorneys and to recruit legal partners for specific needs. (i.e. Bar website, e-blasts, Bar Journal, A Lawyer Helps)
 - c. Help local and special bars tap into resources that the courts bring to LRE purposes. (i.e. courthouse tours, judges in classrooms, Court Community Connections, Supreme Court Learning Center)
3. Communicate the value of LRE in a manner that reaches educators and legal professionals.
 - a. Define and communicate LRE program alignment with current curriculum goals, by grade level.
 - b. Conduct LRE workshop sessions at the annual Bar Leadership Forum, or other appropriate bar meetings, and annual Social Studies and Civic Education conferences and include both educators and lawyers.
 - c. Invite educators to select Bar activities. Send lawyers to educators’ conferences.

IMPLEMENTATION and EVALUATION

- We recommend to the State Bar Board of Commissioners that the Public Outreach Committee become the Law Related Education and Public Outreach Committee and be charged with responsibility for this Plan and that its membership include lawyers, educators and LRE professionals.
- Responsibilities of the LRE and Public Outreach Committee could include developing a phased implementation process for the above plan, identifying measures of success for the plan and evaluating outcomes and communicating progress annually.
- Additionally to help inform the phasing of work by the Committee, the goals above are listed in order of the frequency with which the recommendation was made by the participants in the LRE Working Summit.

RECOGNITION

Thanks go to the volunteer Planning Group who led this effort

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