

Dennis N. Banks, Ph.D.: Promises to Keep: Results of the National Survey of Human Rights Education 2000.

This report presents the results of a questionnaire developed by HRE specialists and sent 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.” The goal of the survey was to ascertain if HRE (or peace education) was considered important as reflected in state policy, standards, and curriculum in K-12 education, and to what extent states are in compliance. Key findings include problems of definition, vocabulary, enforcement, and assessment, and the crucial role the classroom teacher plays in the implementing mandates.

The main focus was on how HRE has been integrated into the K-12 curriculum in the US through an examination of the inclusion of human rights topics within state policies as integrated into statewide mandates, standards, and frameworks.

Methodology:

- A survey developed through consultation with HRE educators across the nation. It was modeled after the National Survey of Economic Education, May 1999.
- A select sample of 120 knowledgeable persons was targeted: state education curriculum specialists and officers of state councils for the social studies.

Major findings:

- Mandates and standards: 40% of states indicate HRE is within state mandated curriculum. Terminology varies greatly.
- 5 states (10%) have legislative resolutions to include aspects of HR within the education law of the state. Legislation varies from broad scope of historical and behavior aspects to focused areas that focus primarily on history.
- Primarily Values and Awareness or Knowledge transmitting basic knowledge model (Tibbitts).
- States with mandates does not necessarily mean implementation is required. Seen as guidelines or suggestions. Left up to individual districts.
- 90% consider the mandate extends to all grade levels.
- Developmental nature of HRE is problematic for those surveyed. Mostly left unanswered.
- Specific curriculum topics: Holocaust, Irish Famine, genocide, slavery, and current issues.
- 50% indicate HR mandate reflected in statewide assessment structure.

- 30 states with no HR mandate: 60% also indicate no pattern of integration of HRE in schools. 40% integrated in social studies.

Key messages:

- Progress has been made.
- Issues raised: conflicting definitions and vocabulary, mandates, and assessments. No data on current practice in the classroom which is crucial.
- Human rights abuses occur here as well: racism, women's issues, children's rights, poverty, police brutality, international trade, unemployment, death penalty, gun control.
- Change the language to have people use 'human rights' in everyday life to become incorporated into culture and thoughts. Leads to problems seen as human rights issues.
- From "a legal and constitutional law culture" to a system of laws and a constitution based on human rights.

Promises to Keep: Results of the National Survey of Human Rights Education - 2000, Updated November 2007 by David N. Banks, Ph.D., SUNY Oneonta

Abstract:

What is Human Rights Education? Simply put, human rights education is all 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 is also increasingly recognized as an effective strategy to prevent human rights abuses.

Starting in April 2000, a national survey was conducted to determine the degree to which Human Rights education has been integrated into statewide mandates, standards, and/or frameworks for K-12 instruction. 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 detail the level of inclusion of this topic within their state policies. The analysis of this data is based on returns from all 50 states. The question addressed in this presentation will be:

1. Does your state have statewide mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies for human rights education?
2. At what grade levels do the statewide mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies apply?
3. Name the subject area where human rights education is included.

4. Are schools in your state **required** to implement the statewide human rights education standards, guidelines, or proficiencies?
5. Are specific curriculum topics addressed within your human rights education mandates, standards, guidelines, or proficiencies?
6. Do statewide assessments measure whether students meet the statewide human rights education standards, guidelines, or proficiencies?

Selected Results:

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. Five states (CT, IN, MA, NJ, NY) have legislative resolutions to include aspects of human rights within the education law of the state. *A follow-up in 2007, added AK, AR, CO, HI, IL, MI, MS, NE, NH, ND, OK, TN, VA, WA, WV and WI to the list making 36 states with human rights in their standards and/or curriculum.*

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. Those who did respond found the standards/mandates to be developmental in nature.

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.

The National Standards that apply to this topic (and impact teacher preparation) are those of the National Council for the Social Studies/NCSS, National Council of Teachers of English/NCTE, and National Science Teachers Association/NSTA). See www.ncate.org for additional details.

Updating:

What is the place for HRE within the K-12 curriculum? No discussion of curricular issues would be valid without recognizing the role played by the movement toward state and national standards (and their subsequent assessments). Realistically, there can be no room for content that is not somehow found within those standards. Many of you have read my article on the 2000 National Survey of Human Rights Education which uncovered the fact that 20 states had included human rights issues or content within their state social studies standards. A recent updating of that survey shows an increase. As of Fall 2007, 72% (36) of the states include HRE concepts and/or content within their state social studies standards. Five states have legislative mandates to address these issues. These standards direct what is to be taught in K-12 classrooms across the states. In most cases, the standards also direct what is being tested. As painful as it may be to admit, the most successful way to insure that HRE will be included in classrooms is for human rights-related questions or essays to start showing up on high stakes exams.

This approach is, however, self-limiting. By depending on standardized tests we limit ourselves to the "knowledge" level of human rights education as defined by Tibbitts and leave little room for values or action. This is a first step none the less and better than nothing.

National standards on the other hand, are seen more as "guidelines" and have varying impact on individual states. Where their impact is most widely felt is in teacher preparation programs, specifically those connected with schools of education that have accreditation through NCATE. At this point 550 schools are so-accredited with another

100 in the application phase. They represent a large percentage of the future teachers of this country. In each case, the institution must show that its preparation program meets the standards of the various subject area specialty organizations (NCTE, NCSS, NSTA, ACEI, etc).

Those standards developed or adopted by NCSS (Social studies) and NCTE (English), in particular lend themselves to promoting HRE. The NSTA (science) standards also seem to be open to including HRE. Teachers who experience HRE in their preparation program and student teaching are more likely to imbed it in their regular classroom teaching. Another way of ensuring this instruction is to include HRE within the certification exams now being used across the states. The only one that I am aware of that currently includes HRE is the New York State Teacher Certification Examination, Content Specialty Test for Social Studies which specifically includes human rights content within the examination guidelines. (New York is one of the states with a legislative mandate.)

With human rights language, concepts, and/or topics being included in at least 36 state documents, the potential is there to increase HRE programming. Whether in teacher preparation programs or continuing professional development for veteran teachers, a wide range of options are available. We are no longer invisible and need to take full advantage of the momentum.

Adapted from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center website and Adrea Cohen's 2015 Human Rights Education Survey Report.