
HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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SUBMITTED BY: **HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATORS USA (HRE USA)** AND
U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK (USHRN)

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Human Rights Educators USA (HRE USA) is a national network of over 400 individuals and organizations in the United States that promotes human rights education. The network was founded in 2012 and includes civil society organizations (CSOs), teachers and students, educational administrators, higher education faculty, the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, foundations, and other interested persons. HRE USA works with national and state level policy makers to integrate human rights education within curriculum frameworks and policies.

The US Human Rights Network (USHRN) is a national network of over 300 organizations and individuals that was founded in 2003 to strengthen the human rights movement and culture in the U.S. The network strengthens capacity and mobilizes communities to uphold and defend human rights and hold government accountable.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 HRE USA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America. **The focus of this submission is the implementation of human rights education (HRE) obligations by the U.S. government in the formal sector in the areas of curriculum standards, teacher training, and the school environment.**
- 1.2 Information for this report was gathered through three civil society consultative meetings that took place in Massachusetts, New York, and California between July and September 2014, focusing on HRE in these cities and states. Additionally, 120 members of the HRE USA network completed an online survey that assessed the status of human rights education in the policies and practices of their city and state and collected recommendations for strengthening HRE. Key findings from the consultative meetings and the analysis of the online survey are presented in this report.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 1ST UPR CYCLE

- 2.1 **The three recommendations accepted by the U.S. government related to human rights education in the 1st cycle were only partially met.**
- 2.2 Rec 86: *Undertake awareness-raising campaigns for combating stereotypes and violence against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals, and ensure access to public services paying attention to the special vulnerability of sexual workers to violence and human rights abuses.*

There has been improvement in creating school environments where human rights are respected, especially regarding respect for LGBT students. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have adopted anti-bullying legislation that addresses harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.¹ U.S. courts have repeatedly ruled, most recently in 2010, that federally funded secondary schools that allow non-curricular student groups to exist must allow students to form “Gay-Straight Alliance” groups to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools. In 2014, the Department of Education issued guidance that Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, applies to transgender students.²

- 2.3 Rec 87: *Incorporate human rights training and education strategies in their public policies.*

Federal, state, and local governments and agencies share the responsibility to incorporate human rights education and training into public policy. There is a lack of concerted effort at all levels to infuse HRE into the formal education sector in order to meet international and national human rights education obligations. Areas for improvement include curricular standards, teacher training, and school environment.

- 2.4. Rec 105: *Avoid the criminalization of migrants and ensure the end of police brutality, through human rights training and awareness-raising campaigns, especially to eliminate stereotypes and*

¹ *State Maps*. Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. Web. 01 Sept. 2014. <<http://glsen.org/article/state-maps>>.

² Guidance issued by Department of Education on Title IX and Sexual Violence. Web. <<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/qa-201404-title-ix.pdf>>.

guarantee that the incidents of excessive use of force be investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted.

There remains a need for public education on immigrant rights, immigration processes in the U.S., and the lived realities pre- and post-migration for individuals from other countries. Federal, state, and local governments need to do more to create and support school and community-based educational efforts to eliminate stereotypes and negative attitudes towards immigrants that can lead to mistreatment, violence, and disregard of immigrants' fundamental human rights. These educational efforts are particularly critical at the present time, as the U.S. responds to Central American children and families fleeing violence and lack of personal security in their home countries.

3. INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION OBLIGATIONS

- 3.1 There is an increasing body of international human rights law on human rights education³ and a growing consensus within the international community about the fundamental role of education in the realization of human rights. The U.S. government has ratified the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which have provisions related to human rights education. Additional treaties with human rights education provisions that the U.S. government has failed to ratify include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Further to the treaty provisions, there have been numerous General Recommendations made to the U.S. government relating to HRE⁴.
- 3.2 The UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE) and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training are guiding documents that set out standards for human rights education to encompass principles of peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, tolerance, and respect for human dignity. The U.S. government has failed to report to the OHCHR on the implementation of the WPHRE since it began in 2005.
- 3.3 There is currently no comprehensive national framework or action plan on human rights education within K-12 education (primary and secondary), higher education, or the training of educators. There is neither a focal point for Human Rights Education or a National Human Rights Institute with a mandate to provide and ensure quality human rights education.

³ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13), Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 29), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Article 10), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 7), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Article 65), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 8). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the most recent international human rights standard to enter into force, has a highly developed section on HRE, calling for public awareness-raising campaigns and the fostering of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities at all levels of the education system.

⁴ For example, the first set of General Recommendations issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the General Aims of Education refer to human rights education.

KEY ISSUES

4. CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

- 4.1 Problem: The federal government lacks coordination, leadership, and oversight in supporting states' implementation of HRE into curricular standards.** By virtue of our federal system, national, state and local authorities share responsibility for delivery of human rights education. Curricular content in public elementary and secondary schools is primarily determined at the state, not the national, level. National-level recommended standards for mathematics and English/language arts⁵ have been developed called the "Common Core,"⁶ which states have the option to adopt, and are linked to funding from the U.S. Department of Education. States can also choose to align their social studies standards with a newly published "framework"⁷ published by the National Council of the Social Studies.⁸ Even with the limitation of education policy structures, the federal government has done too little to ensure inclusion of human rights education in curricular standards through funding, technical support, communication, or accountability measures.
- 4.2 Problem: On a state level, curriculum standards related to human rights education are disparate and unregulated.** Only 39 states even mention "human rights" in their social studies standards, and among them, only 22 contain the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).⁹ Very few state standards include specific international human rights or humanitarian treaties, obligations, or mechanisms.
- 4.3 Problem: Human rights are most often taught through a strictly historical lens, without attention to contemporary application.** Topics within state-level social studies standards are most commonly the Holocaust, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the creation of the United Nations, and the promulgation of the UDHR. Where implemented, human rights education tends to focus on civil and political rights and omit or minimize references to the full range of human rights, including social, economic and cultural rights.
- 4.4. Problem: Human rights are often taught without attention to human rights skills and attitudes.** The predominant historical content approach to teaching human rights does not facilitate connections between human rights responsibilities and personal behavior through social and

⁵ The ELA standards include a section pertaining to the social studies for grades 6-12, but these are restricted to literacy skills.

⁶ These standards were developed by the by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association. The two entities also made significant contributions to guidelines for social studies standards published by the National Council for the Social Studies entitled "College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History."

⁷ "College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards." NCSS. Web. 11 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.socialstudies.org/c3>>.

⁸ The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has voted to make a public statement in support of human rights education. While not a public agency, NCSS has significant influence in the public education sphere.

⁹ The Advocates for Human Rights (July 2014). "Social Studies Standards in the USA." Unpublished internal document.

emotional learning (SEL), such as critical thinking, inquiry, making connections, and learning about international affairs.

4.5 The teaching of human rights as an historical topic is demonstrated in the *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework*.¹⁰ This is an example of a typical curriculum standard that explicitly mentions human rights only once. While it is noteworthy that students are required to learn about the UDHR, it is inadequate that it is categorized as an historical topic only and disconnected from other topics within the curriculum framework, such as the Holocaust and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. **Without a human rights standard to connect them, the UDHR and other topics are taught only as historical documents or events in isolation from each other, rather than as related components to teach students about human rights and their realization.**

BEST PRACTICES

4.6 While most state curriculum standards are similar to Massachusetts in teaching human rights topics in isolation, some states provide models in teaching students how to apply human rights concepts. An example of a stronger curriculum standard is contained within New York's *Learning Standards for Social Studies*.¹¹ This explicitly mentions human rights seven times, doing so within three out of five of its overarching themes: History of the United States and New York; World History and Civics; and Citizenship and Government. It connects topics from different historical periods to teach students about human rights. An example is its standard to have students "undertake case studies to research violations of basic civil and human rights and genocide. [Students may] use examples from United States, New York State, and world history. Case studies might include chattel slavery and the Nazi Holocaust."

4.7 A Minnesota social studies standard requires 8th grade students to "assess the state of human rights around the world as described in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights,"¹² enabling students to understand and value fundamental principles of human rights and apply those principles in daily life.

4.8 One example of a curricular standard that moves beyond the UDHR and basic notions of human rights is Rhode Island's standard that contains the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as an example of an "enduring/significant document" that they are to use to "demonstrate an understanding of sources of authority and use of power, and how they are/can be changed by identifying and summarizing the rule of law."¹³ Another is an Arizona social studies standard that has

¹⁰ *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework*. Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003. Web. <<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/final.pdf>>

¹¹ *Learning Standards for Social Studies*. Albany, NY: U of the State of New York, State Education Dept., 1996. New York State Education Department. Web. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/documents/sslearn.pdf>.

¹² *Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies 2011*, developed by the University of Minnesota's Human Rights Center. Minnesota Department of Education, 2011. Web. <<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards/SocialStudies/index.html>>

¹³ "Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations for Social Studies ("Social Studies GSEs"): GSEs for Civics and Government Strand." Rhode Island Department of Education. Web. <<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Social-Studies/RI-SS-GSEs-K-12-C-G-Strand.pdf>>.

students “[d]escribe world governmental and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the United Nations and its agencies, NATO, the European Union, the International Red Cross).”¹⁴

4.9 Despite the lack of widespread curriculum standards on human rights, HRE teaching and learning resources have been developed for educators by CSOs and are available online.¹⁵

5. TEACHER TRAINING IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

5.1 Problem: The vast majority of teacher training programs do not require teachers to be proficient in human rights education. When included, HRE is almost always incorporated through initiatives of individual programs, and sometimes only individual professors, rather than state-mandated trainings. Teacher preparation rarely includes the incorporation of human rights into teaching pedagogies, content about international human rights standards, or strategies to develop student skills and values so that they learn to apply human rights principles in local, national, and global society.

5.2. Problem: The vast majority of training programs for other personnel who work with children and youth in schools do not contain human rights education principles and application to daily life. Social workers, paraprofessionals, special education staff, court officials, juvenile justice personnel, after-school program providers, and school partners operating in the classroom (such as AmeriCorps and Teach for America) often work with students requiring special supports. Training programs for such personnel may include references to social and emotional learning, anti-bullying, and non-discrimination, but only in rare instances explicitly link with human rights principles and their application in daily life.

BEST PRACTICES

5.2 Although a minority, some universities offer graduate programs specifically designed to train teachers in human rights education. Examples include the University of San Francisco (Master of Arts in Human Rights Education; Human Rights Education concentration within the doctoral program in International and Multicultural Education)¹⁶ and Columbia University’s Teachers College (Peace and Human Rights Education concentration within the Master of Art in International Education Development).¹⁷ There are also university programs taking part in research and professional development on human rights education, Center for Human Rights and Peace Studies

¹⁴ “Social Studies Standard Articulated by Grade Level: Strand 3: Civics/Government.” Arizona Department of Education. Web. <<http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/files/2011/09/socialstudiesstrand3.pdf>>.

¹⁵ Examples of civil society organizations and public universities that have developed human rights education resources include: The Advocates for Human Rights, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Red Cross, Amnesty International-USA, Dorothy Cotton Institute, Facing History and Ourselves, the Human Rights Center at the University of Minnesota Law School, Human Rights Education Associates, the Human Rights Institute of the Thomas J. Dodd Research Institute at the University of Connecticut, Human Rights Watch Youth Task Force, Robert G. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, Street Law, Inc, and Teaching Tolerance.

¹⁶ “MA Human Rights Education.” - *University of San Francisco (USF)*. University of San Francisco. Web. <http://www.usfca.edu/soe/programs/ime/ma_hre/>;<http://www.usfca.edu/soe/programs/ime/dr_curriculum/>.

¹⁷ “Peace and Human Rights Education.” Teachers College: Columbia University. Web. 01 <<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/its/ice/index.asp?Id=IED+Professional+Specializations&Info=Peace+%26+Human+Rights+Education>>.

at Lehman College in New York,¹⁸ the Human Rights Center at the University of Minnesota Law School,¹⁹ the Human Rights Institute of the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut,²⁰ and the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Project at Montclair University in New Jersey.²¹

5.3 The New York State Teacher Certification Examination (Social Studies)²² tests prospective teachers on their understanding of “the struggle for fundamental human rights and the efforts of nations, individuals, and international organizations to establish and protect those rights.”

5.4 Some schools for social work offer graduate programs that are linked with human rights education. Within these schools human rights teaching modules are being developed and shared through the professional association, the Council on Social Work Education. This body recently formed a Human Rights Committee charged with supporting national curriculum development and implementation of the 2008 competency/standards on human rights. Examples of Social Work school that have integrated HRE into their courses are University of Connecticut School of Social Work, Fordham University, and Monmouth University.²³

6. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

6.1 Problem: Bullying continues to be a significant problem in the United States and lacks an effective coordinated response from federal, state, and local governments, as well as district and school officials. The lack of a safe and welcoming school environment for all erodes many students’ human right to education and creates environments conducive to bullying, negative behaviors, poor academic outcomes among marginalized student populations, disparate effects of student discipline policies, and student dropout. Special efforts are necessary to prevent discrimination, prejudice, and violence on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, national or social origin, socio-economic status, gender, sexual identity or preference, ability level, physical appearance, age, or other status.

BEST PRACTICES

6.2 In addition to anti-bullying legislation and court rulings that have addressed the targeting of LGBT students, the U.S. Department of Education has provided an analysis of states’ anti-bullying

¹⁸ "Lehman College - Center for Human Rights and Peace Studies." Lehman College. Web. <<http://www.lehman.edu/human-rights-peace-studies/>>.

¹⁹ "Education Program." University of Minnesota Law School. Web. <<http://www.law.umn.edu/humanrightscenter/program-areas/education-program.html>>.

²⁰ Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of <<http://doddcenter.uconn.edu/>>.

²¹ "Montclair State University." *Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Education Project*. Montclair University. Web. <<http://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/centers-and-institutes/education-project/>>.

²² "New York State Teacher Certification Examinations Preparation Guide: Social Studies." National Evaluation Systems, Inc. Web. <www.nystce.nesinc.com/PDFs/NY_fld005_prepguide.pdf>.

²³ Mission statements of schools highlight how HRE is infused in social work courses <http://ssw.uconn.edu/our-community/mission-statement>; http://www.fordham.edu/Academics/Colleges_Graduate_S/Graduate_Profession/Social_Service/index.asp?WT.mc_id=gss; http://www.monmouth.edu/academics/schools/social_work/socialworkeducation.asp.

legislation,²⁴ issued guidance on preventing bullying,²⁵ and in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice, has provided guidance on school discipline policies.²⁶

6.3 Currently, technical support for creating welcoming schools through HRE is coming primarily from NGOs. HRE directly addresses school environment issues by providing students with skills such as social and emotional competencies, critical thinking and problem solving, identifying root causes and looking for sustainable solutions, and taking action on local and global issues. HRE also promotes values and attitudes that foster respect, awareness, acceptance, and a sense responsibility and concern for self and others.

6.4 Some school districts and states have adopted K-12 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) standards, such as Anchorage, Alaska²⁷ and the States of Kansas,²⁸ Illinois,²⁹ and Pennsylvania.³⁰ The U.S. Department of Education has provided some support of “character education” through grants and online resources.³¹

²⁴ “Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies.” U.S. Department of Education. Web. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/bullying/state-bullying-laws/state-bullying-laws.pdf>>.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Education. “U.S. Department of Education Provides Guidance to Help Classroom Teachers Combat Bullying.” (Sept. 2012), <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-provides-guidance-help-classroom-teachers-combat-bullying>.

²⁶ U.S. Department of Education, *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (Jan. 2014), <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>.

²⁷ Anchorage School District, “SEL standards.” <http://www.asdk12.org/sel/about/standards/>.

²⁸ Kansas Department of Education. “School Counseling: Social, Emotional and Character Development.” <http://www.ksde.org/Agency/DivisionofLearningServices/CareerStandardsandAssessmentServices/ContentAreaM-Z/SchoolCounseling/Social,Emotional,andCharacterDevelopment.aspx>.

²⁹ Illinois Department of Education. “Illinois Learning Standards: Social/Emotional Learning (SEL).” http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm. For a full listing of city- and state-level SEL standards, please refer to analyses by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), available at <http://www.casel.org/state-standards-for-social-and-emotional-learning/>.

³⁰ Pennsylvania Department of Education. “Standards for Student Interpersonal Skills.” (April 25, 2012), http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/Student_Interpersonal_Skills_Standards.pdf.

³¹ U.S. Department of Education, “Character Education,” <http://www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/character/edpicks.jhtml>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO U.S. ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION STANDARDS

1. All levels of government in the United States should immediately take steps to implement human rights education as called for in related articles of treaties that the United States has ratified.
2. The U.S. government should ratify the following treaties and comply with their human rights education provisions: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
3. The U.S. government, in cooperation with governmental and civil society stakeholders, should develop and implement a National Plan of Action for HRE, as called for in the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE). The Plan of Action should be developed before the mid-term review of the implementation of the recommendations following the Second Cycle of the US UPR. The Plan of Action should take into account the recommendations made for incorporating HRE within the schooling sector, including curriculum standards and the preparation of teachers, school staff and educational administrators, policy makers, and other personnel working with youth in schools. The U.S. government should make a public statement in support of human rights education by 2016 and in an ongoing manner submit reports to the OHCHR on the implementation of the WPHRE, as called for in each phase of the WPHRE.
4. The U.S. government should appoint a focal point for the coordination of the Plan of Action by the mid-term review to liaise with states and municipalities on an ongoing basis in identifying and developing best practices for state and local implementation of HRE. The focal point would assist state and local governments in their HRE efforts and engage in educational efforts with the public.
5. The U.S. government should create a National Human Rights Institute in accordance with the Paris Principles before the third UPR cycle, including a mandate to provide and ensure quality human rights education.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO CURRICULUM STANDARDS IN HRE

6. The U.S. Department of Education should encourage and support, technically and financially, state and local efforts to incorporate human rights education in legislation and departmental policies affecting school curriculum, professional trainings, and school environment.

7. Human rights education should be incorporated within the curriculum standards of key subject areas, such as social studies, and human rights themes and principles should be integrated across all disciplines by the Third Cycle of the US UPR. Existing approaches within U.S. curriculum that can be built upon include an expansion of the treatment of civil and political rights to include the full range of human rights; links between the principle of non-discrimination with the broader set of human rights principles; study of international and regional human rights treaties, bodies, and mechanisms and associated US obligations; and the promotion of human rights skills, such as social emotional learning (SEL) and attitudes. All teaching and learning materials should reflect and promote human rights values.
8. The U.S. government should provide support and funding for CSOs providing human rights education resources related to curriculum frameworks, with evidence of such actions before the mid-term review.
9. The U.S. Department of Education should equip state and local governments to review and improve their educational policies, practices, and outcomes in order to ensure human rights education for every child.

RECOMMENDATION RELATING TO TEACHER TRAINING

10. The U.S. government should work with legislatures and credentialing and accreditation entities to ensure HRE in education programs for teachers, administrators, and other educational personnel working in schools that receive federal funding. These actions should take place before the Third Cycle of the US UPR and involve cooperation with educational institutions already implementing HRE and civil society organizations promoting HRE.
11. The U.S. government should work with legislatures and credentialing and accreditation entities to ensure HRE within training programs for social workers, paraprofessionals, special education staff, court officials, juvenile justice personnel, and other providers of school programming that receive federal funding by the next cycle of the US UPR, in consultation with existing HRE providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

12. The U.S. government should provide monetary and technical assistance to non-governmental organizations, institutions of higher education, and school districts to ensure safe and welcoming school environments. The U.S. government should provide grant funding for the development of appropriate multicultural programs for building mutual respect within and among racial/ethnic/gender/ability groups in order to build a culture of mutual respect that would itself be a counterweight to cultures of bullying and intimidation. HRE must be central to schools developing a standard of non-discrimination and diversity. There should be evidence of such efforts before the mid-term review.

13. The U.S. government should strongly encourage state and local educational agencies, as well as individual schools, to adopt social emotional learning (SEL) standards by the Third Cycle of the US UPR.
14. The U.S. government should strongly encourage all states to adopt strong anti-bullying legislation by the next Cycle of the US UPR.
15. The U.S. government should immediately require all schools that receive federal funds to evaluate the potentially disparate effects of their school discipline policies and begin ongoing federal- and state-level monitoring of affected populations and publicly communicate results.