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California Three Rs

Rights, Responsibility, and Respect

*A Project of the California County Superintendents Educational
Services Association and The First Amendment Center*

Volume 4, Number 3

February 2007

Applying the Three Rs Principles in Our Schools

by

Margaret Hill, Ph.D., California Three Rs Project Lead

Ever growing cultural and religious diversity is a reality in American society in the 21st century. Though this diversity is a source of national strength in forging new economic, cultural, and social linkages in today's global economy, there are real challenges to America's experiment in liberty. As Oliver Thomas, Charles Haynes and their co-authors pointed out in *Living With Our Deepest Differences*,

Expanding pluralism means change... a constant game of musical chairs as different players become winners and losers in the struggle for power and influence in society. Unless the protections of the First Amendment and religious liberty are respected, each new group will succeed in imposing its will and beliefs on others.

Nowhere does the diversity "rubber hit the road" more intensely than in our public schools. As the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) outlined in its policy on religion and curriculum almost a decade ago, "Educators at all levels should be committed to the concept of a pluralistic and democratic society that accepts diversity of religious belief and practice as norms."

Nothing serves as a more useful tool in dealing with expanding pluralism and meeting ASCD's policy than the Three Rs principles derived from the constitutional guarantees articulated in the First Amendment. These principles serve as the Golden Rule of Civic Life:

Rights – By right of birth and protected by the Constitution, each individual has freedom of conscience. This right means that a person may hold any faith or world view even one radically different from that of the majority.

Responsibilities – Each of us has the responsibility to see that the rights of everyone, even those with whom we profoundly disagree, are equally protected. It is only through exercising this responsibility toward others that our own rights are protected.

Respect – Because conflict and disagreement are inevitable in a diverse society, respect is an essential aspect of its civil functioning. Respect has a dual meaning. People must respect the rights of others to hold views different from their own. They must also behave respectfully or civilly in expressing their views and listening to those of others.

How do these principles of religious liberty apply in schools? The Three Rs principles are important guidelines in three areas or levels of school governance: school-community relations, school and classroom policy development, and curriculum.

School-Community Relations:

When applied to school-community relations, the Three Rs guide people to live with their deepest differences by committing to work for public policies that respect the rights of all. If the American experiment in democracy is to survive in this time of intense cultural conflict, our public institutions such as schools must model democratic processes through open forums, involvement of all stakeholders, and civil dialogue. Community members representing a wide range of beliefs and worldviews must have an equal opportunity to participate. No one belief, even if it is held by the majority, can be forced on everyone, even in the name of efficiency or tradition. Human rights are not subject to majority approval. When common ground is identified at the beginning of a conflict and people are assured that they won't be shouted down or denied access to the public forum, in the vast majority of cases, compromise can be reached.

School and Classroom Policies:

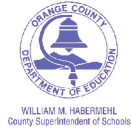
The Three Rs are very practical tools for establishing school and classroom policies. In First Amendment Schools across the country, students are using the principles to address issues and create policies that are fair, respected, and followed by all. Many teachers use the principles as a way to develop and maintain with their students fair discipline policies and procedures. School-wide policies that have worked well include user friendly opt in/opt out options for school events or curriculum topics which allow students and parents to exercise their rights free from coercion. Within the law and in consideration of time, place, and manner requirements for effective school functioning, religious needs are accommodated. Secular and religious groups have equal access to facilities and after-school extracurricular programs. Rights and restrictions on the expression of religious and secular beliefs of students, faculty, and parents are based on constitutional guarantees, clearly understood, and fairly administered.

Curriculum and Instruction:

In curriculum, the application of the Three Rs principles begins with a district/school instructional materials selection process that provides meaningful inclusion of community, parents, and (when possible) students. Most fundamentally, there is a school-wide effort to teach and practice the shared civic values and constitutional principles of a democratic society. This is part of the curriculum at every grade level. Students learn how to influence public policy through participation in school and community-based service learning projects that apply the curriculum content to real world issues. When all students, from all faiths and cultures learn and practice the civic values of rights, responsibilities, and respect in content-based discussions, role play, and simulations of democratic processes in the classroom, research shows that they become more tolerant of views with which they do not agree and participate more effectively as citizens. Part of this results from the inclusion of various worldviews, religious and secular where appropriate in literature, art, history, and music curriculums. At the same time there is clearly an academic rather than a devotional focus in the study of religion that helps students understand various worldviews but does not require that they support those views. This can be seen in the treatment of religious holidays at the school. They are studied about, but not celebrated.

Conclusion

The above discussion shows that Three Rs of Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect are not just lofty ideals but useful guidelines with practical application in our schools. Their use will ensure that public schools promote the civic values essential for the success of America's experiment in liberty in the most pluralistic society in the world.



California Three Rs Project, CSU San Bernardino, San Joaquin COE,
San Bernardino CSS, and Orange County DOE

invite

Grade 4-12 teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists
to a Teaching American History Institute



Religion in American History What to Teach and How to Teach It

Part II: June 25-29, 2007



LOCATION: SBCSS West End Educational Service Center
8265 Aspen Avenue
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

TIME: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

STIPEND: \$450 after summer session
\$250 after follow-up meetings and assessments

BONUS: \$300 for school that provides a control group class
for the project evaluation

FOLLOW-UP: 2 days TBA, sub costs paid
(Housing available for teachers traveling more than 1 hour)

TOPICS

Established Churches in Late 18th c. & Virginian Statute for Religious Freedom
Foundations for Religious Liberty in the Constitution – No Religious Test & First Amendment
Religious Influences on Politics and Reform in Nineteenth Century
Anti-Catholic Activity and Know Nothings, Utopianism, Mormons
Religious Influences 1880s-1920s, KKK, Scopes Trial
Flag Salute Case and FDR's Four Freedoms – Religious Liberty Reemphasized
Religion and Communism During the Cold War – Religion and Civil Rights Movement
Diversity of Religion in America after the Immigration Act of 1965
20th c. Court Interpretations and Their Influence on Understanding the First Amendment
Current Issues Related to Religion and Public Education
Applying the Three Rs Civic Principles

Diversity of religious belief and evolving principles of religious liberty have had a tremendous impact on America's story in the last 400 years. However, this is an area little taught in college courses on United States history. This one-week institute and follow-up activities will provide educators with content on the topics listed above, guidelines for the academic study of religion, and strategies to improve learning and civic participation of students. Become a leader in your school and district on issues of religious liberty and on the teaching about religion in a manner that is culturally sensitive and constitutionally permissible.

For information, contact: Margaret Hill, (909) 537-5459 drpeghill@verizon.net

Online Registratio: <http://oms.sbcss.k12.ca.us/index.php>

Common Ground Resources:

Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas. First Amendment Center, 2001.

This book has guidelines on how to handle a wide range of issues related to religious liberty and public schools.

First Amendment Center: Religious Liberty http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/rel_liberty/index.aspx

This is an up-to-the-minute resource with current issues and court cases. A PDF version of *Finding Common Ground* is available here.

For California Three Rs program information, contact...

Dr. Margaret Hill, California 3Rs Project Lead, California State University San Bernardino, 5500 University Pkwy., FO 115, San Bernardino, CA 92407, (909) 357-5459, mhill@csusb.edu

For First Amendment religious liberty information, contact...

Charles C. Haynes, First Amendment Center Senior Scholar, First Amendment Center/Arlington 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209 Tel: 703/528-0800 Fax: 703/284-3519 chaynes@freedomforum.org

For information on teaching about world religions, contact...

Dr. Bruce Grelle, Director, Religion and Public Education Resource Center, Department of Religious Studies, California State University Chico, Chico, CA 95929-0740, (530) 898-4739, bgrelle@csuchico.edu

Sign up to receive the **Three Rs Bulletin** and program announcements electronically at peg_hill@sbcss.k12.ca.us