



CCSESA

**California Three Rs
Advisory Committee**

Robert F. Kane, Esq.
Americans United for Separation
of Church and State

Michelle Deutchman
Anti-Defamation League

Joseph Annicharico
Association of California School
Administrators

Wayne Jacobsen
BridgeBuilders

Henry Clark
California Council of Churches

Merrell Frankel
California Council for the
Social Studies

Gary Jones
California County Superintendents
Educational Services Association

Kristen Cruz
California Department of Education

Nancy McTygue
California History-Social Science Project

Ron Herring
California International Studies Project

Barbara Ledterman
California PTA

Brian Rivas
California School Boards Association

Cheryl Brown
CA Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod

Patricia Arlin
California State University San Bernardino

David Richmond
Center for Civic Education

Nancy Martin
Chapman University

Forrest Turpen
Christian Educators
Association International

Marshall Croddy
Constitutional Rights Foundation

Gary Dei Rossi
Curriculum & Instruction Steering Com.

Marianne Farina
Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology

Rob Williams
First Amendment Schools Project

Shabbir Mansuri
Institute on Religion and Civic Values

Maha ElGenaidi
Islamic Networks Group

Jackie Berman
Jewish Community Relations Council

Marcia Beauchamp
Marcia Beauchamp Consulting

Mynga Futrell
Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in
Teaching about Religion

D. Keith Naylor
Occidental College

Judith Lessow-Hurley
San Jose State University

California Three Rs

Rights, Responsibility, and Respect

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

Volume 6, Number 3

January 2009

Fostering Civic Virtue Through the Three Rs: Rights, Responsibility, and Respect

By Margaret Hill, Director CA Three Rs Project

Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks, no form of government, can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a chimerical idea.

James Madison

As the Founders clearly understood, America's democracy is an experiment...an experiment based on ideals of liberty and justice that rely on an unfaltering commitment to civic virtue and to ethical character. America's commitment to inalienable rights requires that each member of the polity uphold these rights for all others, even the smallest minority. Knowing that American society even in the 18th c. was diverse ethnically, racially, religiously, and culturally, the Founders built a unified nation around principles of "liberty and justice" through a constitution that protects individual rights and binds Americans together as a people. Because of our diversity, the values that foster this unity are of necessity civic rather than religious or cultural. Preserving and expanding these democratic ideals for each new generation is the goal and fundamental task of public education. This task has been overshadowed in recent years by educational reform focused almost exclusively on reading and math. We have seen that civic engagement and responsibility, the school's learning climate, and student motivation to learn have all suffered. The future of the nation requires us to refocus attention on the school's role in fostering a reasoned commitment to democratic principles and civic virtue. The Three Rs of Rights, Responsibility and Respect are an important tool for educators to restore this civic purpose of schools.

How do the Three Rs serve this purpose? When educators, parents, and students truly understand the First Amendment principles of Rights, Responsibility and Respect they develop a new understanding of the meaning of citizenship. They come to see that the Constitution with its Bill of Rights provides a civic framework of rights and responsibilities that enable all of us to work together for the common good in public schools. This means that everyone in the school community recognizes freedom of conscience as an inalienable right for every person, even those with whom they disagree fundamentally. The First Amendment protects citizens from having religion thrust upon them in schools, yet the First Amendment also protects those who wish to privately practice their religion while in school.

An even more important aspect of the Three Rs is that it reminds us that in order to preserve these rights, all people have the responsibility to protect them for all others. This means that freedom of conscience for ourselves is a universal right joined to

a universal duty to protect that right for all others. This means that the public school educators, parents, and students, must uphold the right of religious liberty for students of all faiths or none.

But people being people there are bound to be disagreements over public school policy and curriculum. Students are often the pawns in these disagreements but can learn a great deal about democratic citizenship by understanding the rights of each group to argue for their positions. As Charles Haynes of the First Amendment Center has said, “The importance of recognizing the rights [of others] and realizing we are all a religious minority somewhere in this country are important. As for respect, debate is necessary. But it is how we debate that is more important.” Schools must model and reward civil discourse at times when faculty, students, and/or community are in the midst of conflict and struggling with differences. Individual educators and school leaders need to develop and review guidelines to make sure there were outlets for dealing with religious and cultural conflict. Best of all, they need to develop a Common Ground Task Force or Advisory Group in advance of conflict. This pro-active approach reinforces the importance of listening to opposing positions and ideas as an indication of respect. Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools, available from the First Amendment Center at <http://www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=3979> offers strategies for resolving conflict by finding common ground.

Students are just as capable of using these ideas as the adults on public school campuses. The advantages of helping young people do so far outweigh the time it takes to teach the principles. Schools can apply the “Rs” broadly and use these principles as a core component to a civics-based character education effort. Students familiar with the Three Rs come to see their value and use them to evaluate actions and behavior in literature and history lessons, but more importantly, on campus and in the classroom. Rob Wilson, First Amendment School principal in Modesto, has applied the First Amendment in his school as something to help students to become better citizens and to deal with differences and resolve conflict. The results of using the First Amendment as a learning tool far exceeded expectations. As these elementary level students grew in ability to examine issues and resolve conflict, they also began to take responsibility for their own learning and behavior and for making the whole school a fairer, better place for everyone. The school’s dramatic test score improvements have caused others to take the risk of broadening their school reform efforts from a top down reading and math focused curriculum to one that builds student and teacher efficacy. This approach has not only empowered students to manage behavior and influence policy at their school along with their teachers and administrators, it has shown them that American democratic values really work to make a better society. This is civic virtue in action.

Sources:

Likona, Thomas. Academic Achievement and Character Development: Practical Strategies for Classroom Teachers,” in Character Matters. Touchstone, 2004, pp. 121-143.

National Council for the Social Studies, “Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies.”

**California 3Rs Project
Winter-Summer Calendar 2009**

February 7 - Buddhism in American History: Beliefs, Practices & Contributions

February 20 - Muslims in American History: From the Colonial Era to Today

February 21, March 14, and May 16 - Teaching About Religion in Public Schools

March 6 - Teaching About World Religions: Pitfalls and Promising Practices

April 25 - Darwin in the Schools: Science, Faith, and the 3Rs

May 7 (10 a.m. - 4 p.m.) - California Three Rs Planning Committee Meeting

May 7 (1:30 - 4 p.m.) - California Three Rs Advisory Committee Meeting

July 20-24 - Religion in American History Institute: What to Teach and How to Teach It

Alameda County Office of Education, The California Three Rs Project, CSU San Bernardino
& the Religious Studies Program at UC Davis
present

Teaching About Religion in Public Schools

Among the most challenging content in both the U.S. and world History-Science Content Standards is the extensive coverage of the beliefs, practices, and impact of religion on human history. In addition to this content, for which many have received little preparation, educators must also understand the constitutional issues related to how religion is addressed in public schools. This Saturday workshop series is designed to provide assistance in both these areas. The program will feature scholar sessions on the major religions covered in the Standards, paired with teacher discussions on how to apply this content in California's religiously diverse classrooms in a constitutionally permissible manner. Professional development credit is offered.



Saturday, February 21, March 14, and May 16, 2009
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Alameda County Office of Education, 313 W. Winton Ave., Hayward CA 94544
\$150 fee includes morning refreshments, materials, and lunch all three sessions.
Limited scholarships for registration fee are available. Optional university credit offered.

Content Topics

The Nature of Religion and the Legal Parameters for Teaching About Religion in Public Schools
Basic Beliefs and Historical Evolution of Judaism * Early Christian Beliefs and History
European Religious Reformations and Their Impact * History and Basic Beliefs of Islam
Basic Beliefs and History of Hinduism * Beliefs and Cultural Influences of Buddhism

Registration deadline is February 13, 2009. No refunds after deadline.

Questions? Contact Avi Black, H-SS Coord. Alameda COE, 510-670-4239, ablack@acoe.org

-----Religion Series-----

Name: _____ School: _____

District: _____ School Phone: () _____ School Fax: () _____

School Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Method of Payment: Check (made payable to ACOE) _____ PO (PO #) _____

Mail registration coupon and fee to: Avi Black, H-SS Coordinator, Alameda COE
313 W. Winton Ave., Hayward, CA 94544
Phone: 510-670-4239

Common Ground Resources:

Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas. First Amendment Center, 2007.

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, Department of Educational Leadership & Curriculum, California State University San Bernardino, 5500 University Pkwy., San Bernardino, CA 92407
(909) 537-5459, mhill@csusb.edu

For First Amendment religious liberty information, contact...

Dr. Charles C. Haynes, Senior Scholar, Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 555 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington D.C. 20001 Tel: 202/292-6293 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, 400 West First Street, Chico, CA 95929-0740,
(530) 898-4739, bgrelle@csuchico.edu

Sign up to receive the **Three Rs Bulletin** and program announcements electronically at mhill@csusb.edu. or see http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/score_lessons/3rs/index.html

Dr. Peg Hill, Director
California 3Rs Project
Dept. of Educational Leadership & Curriculum
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407