

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Each committee prepared recommendations to the Workgroup as a whole. The final recommendations contained in each committee report have been adopted by the Workgroup and comprise this Report. The Workgroup ultimately envisions a permanent, sustainable institutional delivery system for Public Legal Education in Washington State. Therefore, the most urgent recommendation is the creation of a transitional entity to take over where the Workgroup has left off. The remaining recommendations are summarized here, and set out in full in the Report. Recommendations have been labeled as short-term if they might be implemented within the first one to two years. Recommendations were labeled long-term if they might take two years or longer to implement. The Workgroup did not prioritize or rank the recommendations because it believed the transitional entity and its successor would necessarily have to do so.

A. PLE STRUCTURE

“The Council on Public Legal Education” (Council) is designated as the transitional PLE entity. It is intended to be an umbrella organization. Membership could include end-user groups/citizens at large representing various constituent groups and partners such as seniors, youth, immigrants, legal services providers, technology executives, law librarians, court clerks, education, bar, bench, legislature, and ATJ Board.

The governing body of the Council will be a PLE Board. It was agreed that a workable size is 15 or fewer. Whether this Board is strictly a blue ribbon type of group that attracts attention and resources to the PLE issue or whether it is primarily a working board was debated but not resolved. This issue needs to be resolved before the initial appointments to the Council are made. Who will appoint the initial Council has been left an unanswered question pending feedback from the Access to Justice Conference, the Access to Justice Board and the Board of Governors on the balance of the report.

The Committee proposes that the transitional Council be “housed” in the Office of the Executive Director of the Washington State Bar Association and be staffed by 2 FTE, WSBA staff members (an increase of 1.5 FTEs). This recommendation is consistent with and flows from the support provided by the WSBA throughout the Workgroup process. Whether the WSBA is an appropriate or desirable home for the Council in the long term is an open question.

The Workgroup recommends that one or more advisory committees be utilized by the Council to expand both the expertise and the group of stakeholders who have ownership in the overall process or in specific projects. Project implementation contemplates heavy reliance on volunteer participation.

During the transition phase, the Council’s Board will develop a budget and plan for permanent funding. The initial plan does not contemplate public funding, however the Council is encouraged to explore legislative funding as well as solicitation of private funding. The Council will evaluate the appropriateness of its initial structure for its

longer-term operation, and should specifically evaluate the potential inclusion of a 501(c)(3) structure.

Finally, the Workgroup recommends that the Council on Public Legal Education arrive on the scene in an event or program to draw attention to itself and the important tasks before it.

B. SHORT-TERM PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a Gateway Website¹:
 - Determine content of existing sites and develop links.
 - Identify gaps in available information; work with legal and community resources to develop dynamic content and materials that fill in the gaps.
 - Provide universal access to this website through kiosks, libraries or other public sites at no cost to the user.
 - Add bibliographic materials, programs, and resources for teaching courses to promote civics understanding and citizenship education
 - Ensure greater distribution of public access programs about the law.
- Establish a resource center for collection and distribution of audio and videotape materials.
- Support the Washington State *Essential Learnings*² in the area of Social Studies, along with a strong assessment component that will provide a framework and accountability for consistent and effective citizenship education.
- Courthouse Facilitators:
 - Maximize effective presence and use of courthouse facilitators so that parties are prepared and educated.
 - Secure funding to expand courthouse facilitator programs.
 - Publicize the courthouse facilitator programs and promote them to the public.
- Establish a statewide toll-free crisis line for legal questions with the ability to make “smart referrals” to the appropriate legal group.
- Establish a resource center for the media (including providing packets to media assignment desks so reporters know where to start on justice-related issues).
- Develop a “law school” for legislators, local officials and community leaders; develop the same for media.

¹ Our intention is that all of the referenced materials be collected with reprint permission for distribution to individuals lacking access to the internet.

² The *Essential Learning Academic Requirements* (EALRS) contain the statewide civics standards for K-12 curriculum and drive what schools teach on a day-to-day basis. The PLE Workgroup sent a letter expressing support for the Social Studies Assessment to the Commission on Student Learning. (1/18/99 Letter to the Commission on Student Learning, See appendix A-8).

- Expand the on-line availability of pattern legal forms and documents.
- Expand the definition of “law-related education” to include the broader more expansive areas of civics or democratic citizenship education.
- Provide PLE in culturally relevant formats; provide cultural relevance training for PLE providers and trainers, including court personnel.
- Periodic publication of tabloid-style inserts on the Bill of Rights by major newspapers.

C. LONG-TERM PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PLE in the Community

- Community organizations/churches are provided with a catalog of speakers, videos, and pamphlets on a variety of legal topics.
- Resource tool/lesson plan for organizations who want to assist certain audiences understand the law and the legal system. Lawyers as Parents Program in the schools (recognizing this idea is more appropriately part of another PLE committee).
- Student publication (and population in general) ala “The Legal Eagle,” a New Jersey publication (courtesy of Mary Alice Theiler) provided quarterly to students. This could also be provided to community news organizations who might distribute as a “freebie.” (Again recognizing this is partly an idea within the parameters of another PLE committee.)
- One new video on the law and system per year, such as TVW’s “Supreme Justice,” with the hope of building a library.
- Information in Voters’ Pamphlet on basic civics, on the justice system, plus a legal resource list.
- Moderated discussions, live or on-line.
- Air public service spots on the legal system on TV statewide, and full-page ads in newspapers.
- Local resource locations or tools whereby people can easily access information about the law (e.g., phone line or Kiosk).
- Development of ATM-type technology in malls or grocery stores with the ability to dispense basic legal information or otherwise access the legal website we have suggested.
- Material needs to be in alternative formats for those who speak other languages or are disabled.
- Speakers Bureaus and websites should be able to react quickly to legal events, engender public dialogue about them, and provide media access to that dialogue.
- Information packets provided to people at entry points during their legal “wellness” life (e.g., when you rent or buy a house, start a new job, obtain or renew a driver’s license, have a baby).

- Raised consciousness among educators of necessity to teach the substantive aspects and principles of democracy (recognizing again this may be within the purview of another PLE committee). Need to permeate the hearts and minds of statewide educators.
- Survey responses that demonstrate people better understand rights and responsibilities.

2. PLE in the Formal Legal Process

- PLE information is provided in user-friendly formats:
 - a) Identify existing legal resources, including legal services and volunteer attorney organizations, informational materials, pro se assistance programs, etc.
 - b) Develop a prototype format and guidelines for brochures and other materials being made available to the public.
 - c) Use a readability expert to get text written to 6th grade level.
 - d) Apply the prototype format to all materials and dissemination venues, including written materials, website content, oral presentation, etc.
 - e) Develop materials to train the trainers, that is, persons dispensing the PLE information.
 - f) Outreach to social service providers so that they are aware of available legal resources and are adept at referring clients those resources.
 - g) Outreach to youth; provide access to a broad range of information in a way that allows them to get the information privately.
- Structural changes within the court system:
 - a) Determine other subject areas that may lend themselves to courthouse facilitators.
 - b) Consider expanding facilitator locations beyond the superior court, e.g. administrative hearings, federal fair hearings, etc.
 - c) Expand the number of subject areas that have pattern forms; determine which subject areas best lend themselves to pattern forms.
 - d) Use technology to decentralize the formal legal process by setting up municipal and district courts in neighborhoods and by providing electronic filing, arraignments, etc.
 - e) Provide meaningful financial support of jury participation; find ways to better remunerate those who serve on juries.
 - f) Meet the need for interpreters at all stages of the legal process and the need for materials produced in languages other than English.
- Insure public participation in legal system assessment and revision:
 - a) Conduct public forums to generate public interest. Have a celebrity spokesperson moderate the forums.
 - b) Create a feedback process: debrief people as they're using the system; surveys (general and exit); via the hotline; via the website.
 - c) Refer the feedback back to the appropriate source.
 - d) Follow up with response back to the public.
- Washington Legal Channel on television:
 - a) Council on PLE to make content decisions
 - b) Should take advantage of existing videos such as the jury service video and Law Talk; should develop programming about parenting based on current mandatory classes in several courts.

3. PLE in the Formal Education System

- Provide translation resources to schools to help parents and students with appropriate language materials, both written and verbal, concerning school and legal policies.
- Make extensive professional continuing education available to elementary and secondary social studies teachers to prepare them to teach citizenship within the context of social studies courses, including history, economics and geography, as well as civics.
- Elementary teachers, as part of pre-service education and professional continuing education, should receive training that helps them understand the importance of instilling a sense of citizenship in young students.
- Secure funding to develop citizenship units that will mesh with the content of the courses most likely to be taught.
- At the secondary level, continuing professional development efforts should assist history teachers to understand the importance of the study about law and the connections between law and democratic citizenship.
- Convene a symposium inviting faculty of general education programs, schools of education and law schools to foster conversations about amending the general education requirements in all institutions of higher education.
- Encourage colleges and universities to more closely align community service activities into the general education curriculum.
- Encourage institutions of higher education and their associated law schools to strengthen and better publicize to the public and their students the community and public service activities that they perform.
- Encourage law schools to open up more Continuing Legal Education seminars and law school classes to non-lawyers when appropriate.
- Encourage law schools to offer summer workshops for K-12 teachers to prepare them to teach law-related curriculum. Grants to support stipends for teachers would be necessary to support these workshops.
- Encourage young lawyers to volunteer time in K-12 classrooms and go out into their communities to talk about the law, citizenship and our legal system.
- Encourage the three law schools to collaborate in supporting public legal education efforts.
- Law schools should explore ways to make the coursework supporting democratic institutions more broadly available to the general education curriculum at their institutions.

III. CONCLUSION

The seven months of deliberations of the PLE Workgroup were just a beginning. The rough vision outlined above now needs to become flesh on bone. The potential benefits to the people of Washington are tremendous. Through a coordinated effort between the bar, community members, organizations, the media and the government a comprehensive program can be achieved in the near future. Every reader should visualize how he or she can assist in this effort. How will you help?