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Analytical Review of Current Educational Public Policy for California Department of Education Common Core Curriculum Guidelines Pertaining to Law-Related Education for Grades K–12

Aubray McPherson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Aubray McPherson

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2026

Abstract

Analytical Review of Current Educational Public Policy for California Department of
Education Common Core Curriculum Guidelines Pertaining to Law-Related Education
for Grades K–12

by

Aubray McPherson

MS, Walden University, 2019

BS, Walden University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Public Policy and Public Administration

Walden University

February 2026

Abstract

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of a mandated statewide law-related education (LRE) requirement within the California K–12 curriculum. Existing research linked structured LRE exposure to greater civic knowledge, stronger legal understanding, increased social responsibility, and reduced delinquency risk among disadvantaged youth. However, a gap exists due to the absence of integrated qualitative analyses combining prior LRE research with stakeholder perceptions. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the potential social, emotional, and economic implications associated with implementing a statewide LRE public policy. Guided by the conceptual framework consisting of new public administration and the social equity theory, the study employed a qualitative methodology using a content analysis design to examine prior LRE scholarship and stakeholder perceptions. Data were coded and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns. The research questions focused on how mandating LRE in grades K–12 might influence students' social and emotional development and what economic benefits or disadvantages might be associated with implementing a statewide LRE requirement. Results were that participants viewed early LRE exposure as beneficial for civic awareness, social responsibility, and legal understanding, while noting potential social and economic challenges to statewide implementation. The study contributes to academic literature by clarifying implementation considerations and has positive social change implications, as it can inform educators and policymakers about how early legal literacy may influence civic engagement and long-term societal outcomes in K–12 settings.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to all the students who have experienced incarceration. It was one of my greatest honors during my early teaching years to get to know each of you and to gain a deeper understanding of the disconnect between our public educational system and the lack of support many of you experienced, both in school and at home. My hope is that by identifying the shortcomings of current public education policies, future generations will have the knowledge and opportunities needed to avoid the systemic challenges that may have contributed to your incarceration.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Raj Singh at Walden University for his unwavering support, patience, and steadfast guidance throughout this journey. His invaluable instruction has been instrumental in helping me reach this point, and I know I would not have made it here without his direct mentorship and continual encouragement. I am also deeply appreciative of the entire Walden University faculty for their ongoing support over the years. Walden has truly been a game changer, providing the flexibility and opportunity I needed to pursue my educational goals while working full-time.

A special thank you is extended to Mark Johnson, Esq., whose insight and guidance significantly enhanced my understanding of key legal concepts and their practical application. His support has helped shape a clearer vision for how future educational content can be developed to better serve K–12 learners.

I am also grateful to the Los Angeles County Office of Education for the opportunity to teach incarcerated youths. This experience profoundly expanded my awareness of the systemic educational gaps that, if properly addressed, could meaningfully reduce the number of young people entering the justice system.

To my daughter, Adira, thank you for your constant motivation and for keeping my mindset grounded and positive, especially during the most challenging moments both inside and outside of school. I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my daughter, Sabella. Your love and patience for me have been a driving force throughout this entire process.

To everyone else, especially my parents, husband, extended family, and all who supported me, whether mentioned by name or not, I am profoundly grateful. These past few years have been marked by unprecedented challenges, global hardship, personal losses, isolation, and financial strain. However, during adversity, resilience emerged. For each of us who endured, these trials did not define us but refined us, inspiring growth, strength, and renewed determination. Together, we stand stronger, more compassionate, and ready to embrace the future with hope and purpose.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study provided an analytical review of current educational public policies in place for California Department of Education Common Core curriculum guidelines as it pertains to a law-related education (LRE) for Grades K–12. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the role and responsibilities underneath California Educational Code 48907 (California Department of Education, 2020) could be used to expand the development and implementation of a law-related education public policy (LREPP) that could be developed for the purpose of implementing a standard foundation for an LRE that would be developed and expanded within the California Department of Education’s Common Core curriculum guidelines for all K–12 educational settings in the State of California. This study was needed because currently there are no regulated educational guidelines for LRE studies within current K–12 settings. This study aimed to expand research on how a lack of LRE studies within current K–12 settings for the State of California created unequal and inequitable access to essential learning curriculums that are believed necessary to equalize the pools of social and emotional learning strategies that may be essential for a foundation of societal norms.

This study did not aim to address the creation of an LRE curriculum but rather sought to provide an understanding of whether there was a perceived need for the creation of an LREPP to implement a K–12 LRE curriculum and how such a curriculum could be expanded as a common core curriculum requirement. It was through these perceptions that the study took shape to identify social patterns and better understand future opportunities, trends, risks, and challenges concerning the social impact on society.

Background

This study aimed to identify a problem within the California Department of Education pertaining to Common Core curriculum guidelines pertaining to concerns for the need to mandate and/or implement a standardized LRE program. That problem was the lack of educational curriculum foundations that pertain to teaching any kind of LRE. In comparison to current educational policies and mandated Common Core curriculum guidelines, one is reminded that in all K–12 educational settings students regardless of socioeconomic status need learning materials and information to be accessible and equitable when considering what kind of educational information needs to be taught within the lower grade levels. When analyzing California’s current Common Core state standards for these grades levels, I noted that there are only four major content areas known as math, science, English/ELA, and social studies/history that are being mandated underneath current educational public policies. This is not to make a claim that other core studies between various age groups and educational setting are not also required, but it is to state that all aspects currently implemented within a K–12 setting are focused on these four core curriculums, which may be expanded to include other elective courses and/or curriculums offered within these grade levels.

It is important to highlight that there are no foundational or educational supports being given to students within these grades levels when it pertains to teaching generalized legal concepts to provide students with an understanding of how these legal concepts are applied within society. This lack of educational material creates an inequitable opportunity for students and impacts California’s K–12 students who are underexposed to

these types of learning concepts and materials. These students could become disadvantaged within society and later could be at a potentially higher risk of exposure of breaking the law. This lack of adaptation to their social environment is perceived as being a result of students not being exposed to this kind of learning content to identify and/or understand a generalized legal concept that will later have a direct influence on them within California's changing society. This study was needed because it is not only the generalized student body who is affected by this lack of educational resources; the lack of concepts also plays a substantial role in the special education spectrum of learning when identifying the requirements for students who have been considered protected underneath the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act of 2004 (Martin, 2008).

In current educational policies, the focus has been to emphasize communication and a generalized understanding of literary and English concepts and supports, mathematical concepts, basic elements and planetary identifications, and historical concepts to emphasize not repeating history and identifying a generalization of social identity through the foundations of how a society as a whole has been formed. However, when considering these concepts to build a stronger educational foundation for identifying civic and economic processes as it pertains to legal concepts in a generalized overview, there has yet to be any supporting and/or mandating educational public policy to enforce this type of learning. Though previous LRE studies, (McBee, 1994), identified that the need for learning such concepts is necessary and clearly beneficial for younger generations, the lack of a mandate has potentially left students without the necessary components to develop critical application to achieve successful outcomes in society.

Currently, some of the factors contributing to this problem are that schools are ill-equipped to teach legal concepts; they lack infrastructure and support to develop appropriate Common Core strategies for curriculums and/or pacing guidelines, and there is a lack of educational public policy to push this type of curriculum across all K–12 settings. The current study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address the development of an LREPP and public policy pertaining to previous LRE studies that took place within isolated grades over the last 25 years, which never examined these studies from a public policy approach. The current study examined other studies conducted throughout three other states that resulted in a mandate and/or adoption of LRE educational curriculum. It also was the goal of this study to examine and review two current California educational public policies that pertain to the social and emotional development of students and whether an LRE core curriculum or LREPP could be implemented underneath these two current educational public policy guidelines that are already in use.

The chosen methodology for this study was qualitative, driven using a conceptual framework that employed a content analysis approach to previously published Law Related Education (LRE) studies. Digital surveying tools were utilized to engage participants randomly. Data collected included participants' age, level of education, whether they attended college, and if they had participated in an LRE course at the college or university level.

Participants were divided into two categories: Category 1 and Category 2. Category 1 consisted of individuals who had not attended college or who had not

participated in an LRE course at a university level within the past calendar year. These participants were presumed to have minimal exposure to LRE concepts. They were provided with a list of historical LRE articles to select from and were asked to write a content analysis review of one chosen article. This review involved recalling information and reflecting on how such concepts might have been beneficial during their childhood education.

Category 2 included individuals who had recently attended college and participated in an LRE course within the past calendar year. These participants were asked to reflect on their recent exposure to LRE content and assess whether the newly acquired information would have changed their perceptions if it had been introduced during their K-12 education. The study aimed to capture and compare the reflections of both categories, ensuring that the information was not biased by a single researcher. By documenting their perceptions and perspectives on LRE concepts, the study sought to understand how different educational backgrounds and recent exposures might influence the perceived value of LRE concepts in early education. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how LRE concepts could have impacted individuals' social and emotional development if introduced at a younger age.

Participants were informed about the overall survey analysis process and the anticipated time required to complete the survey to mitigate any potential anxiety. They were advised that the process should take no longer than 30 minutes, though the survey allowed up to 90 minutes to account for variations in reading speed and individual learning setbacks. An “undefined” metric was included for cases where participants took

longer than 90 minutes to complete the survey. While the timed metric did not affect the study's outcomes, it provided insights for future research on learning restrictions and the potential impact of processing time on information interpretation. These considerations were relevant for developing a comprehensive LRE curriculum that ensured equal and equitable learning opportunities for K-12 students (McSpadden, 2015).

Problem Statement

There is a problem within the California Department of Education pertaining to common core curriculum guidelines. This problem, specifically, is the lack of educational curriculum foundation as it pertains to a Law Related Education (LRE) being accessible for grades K-12 and a supporting public policy to support implementation and teaching of this subject matter. Currently, California's common core individual state standards for grades K-12 covers four major content areas known as Math, Science, English/ELA, and Social Studies/History. However, there is no foundational and/or educational support as it pertains to teaching legal concepts that would be anticipated to be used within a daily social norm setting. This problem impacts California's students within the K-12 setting as can be seen in previous LRE studies that students who are not being given any foundational development and/or educational support for identifying and/or understanding legal concepts lack the ability to adapt to a structured environment as would be necessary for California's ever-changing society. When put into perspective students are given foundational supports as it pertains to communication, mathematical equations, basic element and planetary identifications, while also identifying key concepts of the past, but when determining if they identify civic and driving economic

processes as it pertains to legal concepts that may have a daily and/or long term impact on their day to day lives there is no driving policy to support the implementation of what was previously noted in prior LRE studies. This has left students incapable of identifying behaviors and social norms which may be necessary to being successful in a daily setting within generalized societal settings. Currently, some of the factors contributing to this problem are that schools are ill-equipped to teach legal concepts; they lack infrastructural support to develop appropriate common core strategies for curriculums and/or pacing guidelines; and there is a lack of educational public policy to push this type of curriculum across all K-12 settings. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address the public policy concerns as it pertains to previous LRE studies that took place within isolated grades over the last 25 years which never examined these studies from a public policy approach. This study will examine other studies conducted throughout three other states which resulted with a mandate and/or adoption of LRE educational curriculum. It will also be the goal of this study to examine and review two current California educational public policies which pertain to the social and emotional development of students and whether a LRE core curriculum or Law Related Educational Public Policy (LREPP) could be implemented underneath these two current educational public policy guidelines already in use.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to use a content analysis approach while also conducting an analytical analysis of identifying previous gaps in education and the implementation of LRE studies for grades K-12 grades. This analysis was only to be

restricted to providing content analysis to studies which have been conducted only within the State of California. All analytical analysis and comparisons utilized studies that were conducted within the last 25 years that will be divided into 3 designated time segments that will be analyzed to compare how prior LRE research opportunities could be utilized to develop a LREPP. The information gathered from each content area timeframe was used to compare these previous studies to current California Educational Curriculum Guidelines and state educational public policies. In addition to the content area comparisons and analysis, this study also aimed to show current comparisons to show what kind of impact a LRE can have on an individual student's social and emotional development within lower grade levels while drawing these comparisons and insights from current adult learners. The goal of these comparisons was to create opportunities for future examination and research conducted as it pertains to any impact an LREPP would have within the California K-12 educational system.

Research Questions

The research questions that were addressed throughout this study helped drive how this study was conducted, performed, analyzed, and qualified:

RQ1: How can the establishment of a Law Related Education Public Policy (LREPP) influence a student's social and emotional development?

RQ2: What economic benefits and/or disadvantages are created by mandating a law related education for grade levels K-12?

The selection of these research questions was based on the identification and need to narrow the current research study to only access a key focus on the potential

development of a LREPP while also allowing for the analysis of potential research respondent insights as it pertains to conducting participant surveys and prior research content comparison.

Conceptual Framework

This study used a conceptual framework to design the research and employed a content analysis approach. This approach had been utilized in previous studies to assist researchers in identifying qualitative connections to previously unexplored concepts and/or methodologies through data collection and comparison. The content analysis approach involved gathering existing research and data to build credibility, dependability, and authenticity for comparative studies (Elo, 2014). In this study, the approach aimed to highlight the significance of information diversity and how such diversity contributes to the development and/or establishment of public policies in general.

For instance, when selecting a framework, a researcher must first determine the direction of the study. The development of a conceptual framework requires creating an original study plan that may not have previously existed or only existed in certain aspects (Elo, 2014). In constructing the conceptual framework for this content analysis approach, it was essential to assess the available information to identify and compare the diversity of previously studied topics and current trends, patterns, and/or social behaviors. This process facilitated a comparative approach within the public administration discipline, providing insights into how these concepts might evolve when analyzing responses that previously lacked substance or understanding, which could now be observed through personal development and educational growth when engaging with participants.

It is important to note that the key focus of this study was framed around using content analysis to address questions related to social equity and equality within LRE education (Sabharwal, 2016). The goal of employing this approach was to collect and compare data sets from over a 25-year period, organized into three comparative timelines: 1994-2007, 2008-2018, and 2019-Present Day. This allowed for an examination of previous LRE studies against current educational public policies, including common core implementation defined under the “No Child Left Behind Act” of 2001, and recent case law studies. By doing so, the study aimed to assess the potential success of future Law Related Education Public Policies (LREPP) and their impact on educational development and behavior.

Nature of the Study

In this study, participants did not engage in a traditional interview process commonly seen in qualitative studies. Typically, a traditional qualitative approach involves the use of interviews or focus groups to establish a direct connection with participants, either by preloading information or administering random surveys (Jabareen, 2009). However, this study utilized a different method, where participants became involved in the debriefing process. They assisted with a content analysis comparison of selected articles and prior research studies, which needed to be analyzed and recorded for comparative purposes. This approach allowed the study to gather information while documenting participants’ understanding of the content being analyzed. This process was crucial for shaping the study’s focus, particularly in terms of perceptual understanding, how complex information is processed by individuals with different levels of exposure,

and guiding the future development of a Law Related Education Public Policy (LREPP) and LRE core curriculum.

Participants were divided into two categories. Participant Category 1 included individuals who were selected at random. These participants received a previous LRE research study, current educational public policy, or an educational article related to LRE studies or social activities pertaining to LRE. They reflected on the introduced information based on their previous knowledge and analyzed whether such information would have been beneficial if presented at a younger age. The analysis provided by Participant Category 1 helped establish a baseline for how individuals with no prior exposure to LRE concepts interpret and process legal information when introduced for the first time.

Participant Category 2 consisted of individuals who had recently attended community college or university and participated in a course on administration of justice or legal concepts within the past calendar year. Unlike Category 1 participants, Category 2 did not receive a previous LRE study or article. Instead, they drew on their recent coursework to share their experiences and insights. They compared and described whether the information learned as adults would have provided any benefit or disadvantage if introduced at an earlier school age. The insights from Participant Category 2 allowed for comparisons and identification of patterns related to the exposure of LRE materials, contributing to understanding the trends, risks, and potential impacts on the development and implementation of an LREPP.

Definitions

For the means of clarification and for the reference of the reader the following definitions have been defined to support a baseline understanding of the terms being used throughout this study.

Articles: The overall data information sets which will be read and interpreted for comparison purposes by Coders of category sets “One” and “Two”

Category 1 coder: A participant within this study who is over the age of 18 and has not taken an introductory course at a community college or local university within the recent calendar year that would have been recognized as being associated to a law related educational study or foundational course work associated to any general or specialized legal concepts.

Category 2 coder: A participant within this study who is over the age of 18 and has taken an introductory course at a community college or local university within the recent calendar year that would have been recognized as being associated to a law related educational study or foundational course work associated to any general or specialized legal concepts.

Coder: A participant in this study who will assist with the analysis and decoding process of the associated articles used for this study.

Google Forms: The system which will be used to build comparative data sets for Coders to enter their results for articles they have decoded.

LRE: References the acronym “Law Related Education.”

LREPP: References the acronym “Law Related Education Public Policy.”

Researcher: The individual who will be guiding this study and the application process of review and analysis of each of the coders.

Assumptions

In planning to conduct this study, a few assumptions were believed to be true. The first assumption was that there would be perceived interpretations of the materials provided, and that these perceptual understandings would help identify patterns and trends. The second assumption was that participants in Category One would likely lack the ability to identify deeper thinking concepts due to their limited exposure to the materials. It was assumed that their understanding and interpretation of the assigned articles would involve some struggle during the decoding process.

The third assumption was that participants in Category Two might experience a “burnout” from legal concepts and information. It was anticipated that these participants might find the survey process to be an additional annoyance given their already extensive exposure to the subject matter. However, it was expected that the results from both groups would reflect any gaps in perceived understanding between individuals with limited exposure to legal concepts and those with more extensive exposure. It was assumed that the reflections and responses from participants would show similar patterns in their decoding processes, allowing for a comparison between the two groups to gain deeper insights into general educational understanding versus deeper educational exposure to legal concepts.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of delimitation referred to the specific aspects of the research problem that were addressed by this study. The research problem of this study was whether the development of an LREPP would present educational benefits and/or disadvantages to current K-12 students within the State of California. The concept for this study was centered around the ideology that the current educational system did not offer students within K-12 settings a deeper and appropriate educational foundation for identifying key concepts and general understandings of the law. The focus of the study was based on the understanding that students within the State of California were facing social and cultural disadvantages in comprehending the rules and regulations surrounding them.

The research approach took a reflective approach by using participants over the age of 18 to recall and/or reflect upon their experiences and interpretations of legal concepts. The reasoning behind this approach was to use older generations to improve the learning environment for younger ones. Participants supported the study by helping to decode and analyze articles that were used to identify educational gaps in previous LRE explorations over the past 25 years up to the present day. The purpose of involving these participants was to better understand the gaps between individuals who had never been exposed to legal concepts and those who had.

The goal of this research study was to use this reflective model to understand why LRE studies had not been implemented within the standard educational foundations during the development of common core requirements and to explore how an LREPP

could mandate such a study, provided that the data sets from participants indicated that having this educational foundation would or could be beneficial to future generations.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were restricted only to the coding and decoding of the assigned information data sets. This study did not map out or delineate the creation and/or development of an LRE program but rather laid out the foundational requirements for how a mandated LREPP could lead to the development and implementation of future LRE requirements for K-12 settings. The limitations of this study were guided by a content analysis approach, which analyzed historical data sets over a 25-year period while also analyzing and recording perceptions of participants who helped categorize such materials throughout this process. The intended purpose of this study was to better understand current trends in social behaviors while projecting the impact of the implementation of an LREPP.

The selection methodology for this research identified the limitations of information being recorded as it was narrowed to perceptual and interpretational understandings of participants. This process was guided to discover the emergence of social trends and themes to overall identify the potential negative and/or positive impacts that could be caused to students within a K-12 setting if an LRE were created and imposed through the use of an LREPP. Current biases that could influence the outcome of this research included intrapersonal relationships and underexposed populations who had never been exposed to legal concepts and/or understanding and therefore might have associated such information with a negative impact. A reasonable measure implemented

to mitigate these biases was to limit participating individuals to providing their analysis of selected content that pertained to currently used educational public policy articles within a 25-year range. Such articles limited an individual's own personal biases when responding to the categorization process to only be about the content information they were being presented with, while drawing personal conclusions and comparisons as to whether such information would have had a positive or negative influence on their education when asked to draw upon their own historical experiences within a K-12 setting.

Significance

The significance of this study provided an opportunity for the California Department of Education to examine and understand the reflections of older generations concerning their intrapersonal connections to legal concepts and understandings necessary for daily use since leaving a K-12 setting. This identification of gaps within the California Common Core Curriculum and implementation of educational information was anticipated to be an essential educational data set that could be used to create equitable learning opportunities in relation to societal expectations. In theory, by local school districts administering a baseline of legal concepts and understanding, it could be assumed that this educational administrative objective would allow for equitable access and equal opportunities to learn the concepts necessary to function in a manner that aligned with societal expectations.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 1 of the study provided a background on the problem of the interpersonal relationship between LRE and the lack of educational curriculum foundations for teaching any kind of LRE in general. The research aimed to discuss the methodology used, which was a qualitative study employing a content analysis approach to better generalize an understanding of LRE concepts in order to find equal and equitable solutions for reducing arrests in poverty-stricken areas by ensuring that such individuals had equitable and equal opportunities within a scale of learning supported by current public K-12 educational systems. It was noted that Chapter 2 of the study would provide more details regarding the research questions addressed, the conceptual framework used, the nature of the study, and the identification of language terms and definitions necessary for establishing best practices and developing consistent research guidelines. The study aimed to provide valuable insights into the problem of the lack of educational curriculum foundations for teaching LRE in general. It was also expected to offer recommendations on how to address this problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review for this study utilized a content analysis approach that provided an opportunity to use historical segmented timelines to analyze content patterns and trends throughout a 25-year period to better understand previous social trends and behaviors as they pertained to prior introductions of LRE concepts. This time frame became significant as earlier studies showed that students who participated in earlier LRE research were noted as having a higher respect for individuals who worked for public agencies that were identified as forms of civil authority, while also creating an understanding and connection to their own individual civic purpose (Jacobson & Palonsky, 1981). I used historical content from various sources to identify opportunities, risks, and challenges faced throughout earlier time periods to hypothesize how and why previous LRE K–12 learning modules were not deemed essential to overall current Common Core curriculum guidelines. The research aimed to identify historical and current patterns regarding how educational information was distributed and administered while being received, analyzed, and decoded by recipients. Understanding and identifying these patterns supported a foundational understanding of how the future development of an LREPP could be established and implemented into current K–12 learning environments.

Historical Research and Literature Comparisons

The historical and literature comparisons used for this research centered around information pertinent to the overall study approach, including the creation of theme categories and subcategories for pattern identification, historical precedence regarding

isolated keywords and phrases used in conducting the research, and how existing studies offered a comparative understanding relevant to the current study and future research. To gather context for this study, I sought to better understand theme-based approaches used to identify patterns of social understanding and behaviors. This research aspect became relevant as it coincided with how themes evolved and were identified through the comparison and analysis process (Ryans, 2003). The historical literature comparison used for the current study expanded a 25-year framework of previous LRE research conducted within the United States. This literature comparison utilized these studies as a foundational approach to enhance the knowledge base for current learning strategies and techniques used in other core curriculum studies. The research databases used to locate these studies included JSTOR, ERIC, Sage, LexisNexis, Ebscohost, and Google Scholar. The historical research aspect of this study expanded upon previous LRE research and studies over the last 25 years, current California Common Core curriculum guidelines for educational distribution and subject topics, and current educational rulings as they pertained to comparisons of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (n.d.) and California Code Regulations Title 2, § 11087(c).

Understanding and Identifying Theme-Based Approaches

This research placed a strong emphasis on using a content analysis approach to better understand how historical actions had left gaps within the California educational system regarding the creation and implementation of an LRE. To address this issue, it was noted that the research would use a compare-and-contrast theme to help identify and categorize historical literature pieces, creating comparative analysis opportunities to

highlight and establish sub-categorizations for the study. This method of analysis had been previously used by Gery Ryan in 2003 for his literary piece “Techniques to Identify Themes” (Ryan, 2003). In Ryan’s work, he identified the processes by which themes were generated and categorized through various steps to better understand methods for describing aspects of social conflicts, cultural identity, and comparisons of perspectives and understandings. He also provided methods for overcoming and relating literature contradictions that may have arisen due to the lack of previous comparative techniques in earlier research studies. This study aimed to build upon Ryan’s initial theme-based techniques by expanding those original processes to offer additional compare-and-contrast theme sub-categorizations.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy used for this study aimed to identify key components and concepts that had been previously explored over the last 25 years in small group settings concerning specific LRE concept strategies and prior studies. Identifying these aspects of conducted research presented the opportunity to uncover research gaps related to LRE concepts and their lack of application within the California educational schooling systems. By using various key words and phrases to extend the initial explored concepts, the research expanded to identify and conceptualize educational implementation gaps between educational public policy and the consistent application of an LRE strategy. These research strategies facilitated the identification and emergence of key words and phrases for the study. The key words and phrases identified were K-12 Law Related Education; Law Related Educational Public Policy; and California in loco

parentis. Each of these key words yielded limited historical studies, which necessitated expanding the initial searches to include California Educational Public Policy Guidelines and California K-12 Educational Curriculum Guidelines. Modifying and expanding these terms allowed for further identification of key studies and guidelines concerning previous studies related to current California Common Core K-12 Curriculum Guidelines, providing a clearer understanding of how school districts within the state and various county managing agencies implemented and/or drove current educational curriculum requirements.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study was built using a content analysis approach. This approach had been used in previous studies to take a historical overview of concepts and/or strategies to compare and contrast data sets and gain a new outlook or perspective on such documents (Sabharwal, 2016). By utilizing this approach, it was noted that the content analysis approach was limited in its ability to highlight the narrative examinations related to the identification and/or understanding of an LREPP. The LREPP concept was new and had never been explored in previous research studies. The concept and acronym had to be created to better explain and identify the missing applications of a public policy perspective, using a historical content analysis approach to identify what was viewed as the missing gap factor in why California's educational school systems did not implement and/or mandate this form of learning modules within a K-12 setting. The gap of this study began with the lack of an educational public policy and the identification of existing policies that schools were required to adhere to.

Throughout this research, it was noted that there was a lack of parallel studies to compare to, which suggested using participants in a content analysis research format where such participants were also involved in the decoding process. Due to this lack of theoretical foundation, this study's approach was the first of its kind to use such methods for the development and implementation of the study's framework

Conceptual Framework

As stated within Chapter 1 of the Proposal this study will use a conceptual framework to design a study that will use a content analysis approach. This approach has been used in previous studies to help prior researchers identify qualitative connections to unidentified concepts and/or approaches using data collection and comparison. The content analysis approach implements the collection of previously collected research and data to build credibility, dependability, and authenticity towards potential comparative studies. (Elo, 2014). In using this approach, within this study it should be identified as to the importance and diversity of information offered when identifying the development and/or establishment of public policies in general. Building the framework for this study was done by using a content analysis approach. This approach again becomes crucial to the administration and application of this study as it allows it to take information that is already readily available to identify, compare, and contrast the diversity of information as it pertains to previous LRE studies. It will be through this comparative process of using this historical information to identify, compare, and contrast current trends, patterns, and/or social behaviors that may or may not be influenced by the development and/or potential implementation of an LREPP. The current use of this framework becomes

essential to this study as it helps to provide significant understanding to the role of public administrative disciplines and/or point of views of the public regarding filling the gap or LRE studies (Sabharwal, 2016). It again will be the goal of using the content analysis approach that I will collect and compare data sets from over a 25-year period that will be grouped into 3 comparative timelines to highlight previous LRE studies against current educational public policies that have been implemented to show their significant impact on educational development and behavior. These grouped time segments will examine material from 1994-2007, 2008-2018, and 2019-Present Day to make comparisons to previous educational public policies guidelines, common core implementation defined underneath the “No Child Left Behind Act” of 2001, and recent case law studies to draw comparisons and assessment of determining the potential success of future law related educational public policy (LREPP).

Literature Review Related to Key Words and Phrases

The literature review process of this study is built around the identification and understanding of previous LRE studies that have been conducted within the last 25 years. In identifying these studies, it becomes essential to first identify the application of the key words and their use in locating articles that are associated to and/or developed around the application of identifying how LRE concepts were first introduced within a historical concept. In using the key words and phrases to identify these historical understandings it should be noted that this research took note of LRE historical studies that were conducted within the State of California. However, in addition, those studies examined additional articles were also utilized when constructing the proposal for this study to lay the

necessary foundation needed for this studies success. As listed below, the following literary concepts are identified for this research purpose to highlight and harness the impact as to how this information becomes relevant towards the conduction of this study.

K-12 Law-Related Education

The key phrase “K-12 Law Related Education” brought up prior research from an earlier study that examined the development and foundational work for a proposed concept of a K-12 Law Related Education Curriculum. This initial proposal was published on a national level and was considered for use within the United States. Within this earlier submission, the initial concept of course work and educational support was created by Robin McBee. This work, titled “Living the Law by Learning the Law: A K-12 Law Related Curriculum Guide” of 1994 (McBee, 1994), was intended to support a foundational educational structure adopted by the United States Department of Education as a noteworthy resource for states to begin educating students on a general law-related curriculum.

In analyzing this guide, it was noted that the work was believed to be incomplete and unfavorable due to each state reserving its rights to determine which content subjects were necessary and desirable among local populations. This breakdown of policy rendered Ms. McBee’s curriculum potentially ineffective due to the lack of required enforcement. Additionally, the curriculum did not allow for transitional understandings beyond minimal concepts and did not offer opportunities for expansion or transition within the current educational system (McBee, 1994).

McBee's Law-Related K-12 Curriculum

The McBee (1994) Law Related K-12 Curriculum became a foundational piece for this study, as it was during the publication of this document that it was historically evident that it was never widely adopted by state educational departments and did not become a national requirement. Although McBee's overall LRE curriculum was published and archived within national curriculum records, it lacked foundational requirements mandating its implementation within state educational systems. The curriculum, now perceived as outdated, was seen as offering only small introductory concepts related to helping K-8 students identify variations of social norms through teaching generalized concepts of right versus wrong social behaviors. Additionally, these introductory concepts provided a generalized overview of how rules were created, implemented, and administered. However, these foundational concepts fell short in addressing how societal rules changed and how social norms transitioned over time.

Based on these foundational perceptions, it could be understood why the curriculum was never implemented or applied on a state or national level for relating legal concepts, reasoning, and understanding to these age groups. The educational material lacked opportunities for expansion, in-depth understanding, and reasoning for transitions in populations, cultural trends, and potential biases that may have existed during the curriculum's development. Although this information became relevant in the current research study, it was noted that for an LRE to be effective, it required a driving force such as an LREPP to promote future educational growth opportunities that could be

easily adapted and modified for previous, current, and future societies, rather than narrowing educational perspectives and understanding.

Law-Related Educational Public Policy

In searching the key phrase “Law Related Educational Public Policy” (LREPP) it should be noted that currently there is no previous study which expanded upon the connection between a Law Related Education (LRE) compared to an LREPP. Currently, only prior research of any kind as it pertains to a K-12 law related educational study only expands into previous isolated studies that are grouped into studies that examine the social and emotional benefits that can be generated and/or developed with when students identify their social responsibilities within a developed society (Social Science Educational Consortium, 2001). This information becomes relevant and essential to the development of a LREPP, since in previous studies there are significant benefits and opportunities to the continuance of pursuing such educational goals for younger people. However, the issue being derived and presented within this research however, is whether pushing for an LREPP as a core curriculum requirement in line with other core curriculum requirements such as English, Math, Science, and History within the State of California would create an educational responsibility that ensured all students within the State are being given equal educational opportunities to LRE information and generalizations which would be necessary to know for the benefit of understanding their roles and responsibilities within the State and under the U.S Constitution. (Social Science Educational Consortium, 2001)

California in Loco Parentis

The key phrase in loco parentis refers to a duty of care in which a person who is authorized to do so may act on behalf of a minor in the place of a parent. Initially established in 1769 by Sir William Blackstone as a common law practice which delegated a part of parental authority to schoolmasters. (U.S Educational Law, 2022) This common law practice has continued to apply throughout the key focus of California's educational guidelines and employee requirements as it pertains to instructional and student facility safety. When searching for this key phrase, the results generated from this search provide research results that provided the definition of the term, the application of this term within the current California Department of Education administrative roles and responsibilities as it pertained to current public educational requirements. In addition, this search also provided a connection to California Education Code, § 48907 and previous presiding cases *Horton v. Goose Creek Independent School District* 690 F.2d 470 (1982); *Gott v. Berea College* 156 Ky. 376 (1913); and *Gott v. Berea College* 156 Ky. 376 (1913); and *Tarasoff v. The Regents of the University of California* 17 Cal.3d 425 (1976).

The generation of these results becomes relevant as the courts in each of these cases define and redefine the use of the term in loco parentis and how educational systems are and are not responsible as it pertains to student interactions within the public educational system. For this study this information and historical background become relevant as it helps to identify the roles and responsibilities which are placed upon current schools' systems nationally, statewide, countywide, and locally within the transitioning and forever growing school districts. To further the understanding of this research, It

should be noted that schools have a legal obligation to students attending these facilities, as they are supported by public funds. As part of a school districts contractual obligation with their state the ruling guiding rule of in loco parentis plays a crucial role in child development and the public need to identify the rules and obligations in which this term can be applied to ensuring that student are adequately prepared with enough information to attempt to be successful within society as it pertains to basic educational and/or social requirements to adapt to an ever changing social world and the rules and/or trends of this world can transition over time.

California Educational Public Policy Guidelines

The key phrase California Educational Public Policy Guidelines triggered broad search which allowed for current educational public policy comparison as it pertained to a generalized overview of current educational public policies enacted in which lower school districts would be required to adhere to. In understanding the demand for educational progress, it should first be noted of what the process is in which the educational system must adhere to when establishing its administration of breaking down educational components to better identify the need and/or core goals of what information should be taught. These educational breakdowns will map out materials, topics, guidelines, restrictions, and/or key focuses they expect students to meet. Though the policies will be generalized to cover an overall general foundation it should be noted that school funding is based on these policy guidelines and dependent on how public policies guidelines are written, it would essentially have a key factor as to how public policies are written and implemented. This general overview, however, brings us to the understanding

that in searching for a California Educational Public Policy Guideline, there is no set of generalized guideline requirements other than that known as the California Common Core Standard. It is from there that all other educational public policy guidelines are built underneath. (Kober, 2012)

California K-12 Educational Curriculum Guidelines

This key phrase California K-12 Educational Curriculum Guidelines allowed for the expansion of key components and currently used educational public policies that were being used within the State of California. This search expansion allowed for the opportunity to identify multiple core learning components that are currently being used throughout the State of California by various districts and school learning sites. The search expansion offered understanding and comparison as to what educational districts with the state found to be essential learning components compared to what they did not. Due to the vast majority of information that was found, this research intends to only apply focus to some of those key curriculum guidelines of comparison the overall general core educational requirements as required by California Common Core State Standards of students meeting a basic understanding of core curriculum focuses such as English, History, Math and Science while comparing these core values to the curriculum expansion components offered by state educational providers that place key focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (also collectively referred to as STEM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (also collectively referred to as STEAM) (Radziwill, 2015). This information becomes relevant to this research as district funding is based on enrollment and the programs in which a school

site offers that meet some of these necessary requirements. However, when analyzing these components, it should be noted that many of these are great in driving an younger students visionary opportunities for the future, it also minimizes other areas of learning in which that same student may not be being given adequate time for, but is equally essential, like a law related education, since such learning would help a potential student better understand their roles and responsibilities within society (O'Connor, 1970)

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, the above referenced articles and research provided within has laid the foundational concepts necessary to explore this topic in further detail. As examined throughout the theme of this study the overall concept identified is to grow this study through a content analysis approach while identifying perceptual understandings and interpersonal conclusions as they become relevant throughout this research study. The purpose of this study is to be drawn from various historical data sets and current educational public policies to identify patterns and opportunities to assess and analyze the impact an LREPP would have on students within lower educational level within a K-12 setting. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology that will be used to conduct the study. The researcher will use a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data. It furthermore identifies how participants will be classified into two categories: Category 1 Coders and Category 2 Coders. It identifies the connection between Category 1 Coders selection methods versus how Category 2 Coders will be identified for the purpose of this study. This information becomes relevant to Chapter 3 as it will be necessary to identify how the roles of each category coder will assist with the decoding

process of articles and what their intended role, purpose, and contribution to this study means.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This study was conducted as a qualitative study using a conceptual framework and content analysis strategies. A selection of articles was analyzed to identify patterns, trends, risks, and potential opportunities related to the development of an LREPP. The study was intended to be an introductory examination of key concepts necessary to build upon for future research opportunities related to current California Common Core state standards and the development and implementation of an LREPP to support the possibility of mandating a K–12 LRE educational requirement. The goal of this study was to identify the potential framework that could be used for the development of an LREPP.

Although the study focused on using a content analysis approach to identify patterns between previous LRE studies and content, it also aimed to compare these studies to recent or current educational social trends and/or higher educational content in relation to LRE concepts and/or materials. The study sought to focus on the possibility of patterns that might emerge from analyzing historical LRE concepts and studies to compare with current social and educational trends for higher level learners outside of a K–12 setting. Reflecting on all content presented between these timelines was essential to identifying educational gaps and patterns necessary for the development and establishment of an LREPP for K–12 learners and educational systems.

To conduct this study, I selected participants randomly to assist in the process of decoding text and articles, providing feedback, and analyzing the articles to convey what they learned from the information presented throughout the decoding process. For the purposes of this study, participants also functioned as coders because they were

responsible for coding and classifying public policy and LRE documents. Participants were divided into two categories: those with no prior exposure to LRE concepts and those with prior exposure. The purpose of dividing participants into two separate groups was to obtain assistance in categorizing and declassifying LRE content to identify trends and patterns from previous LRE studies, breaking down content information at a faster rate and comparing how the information was processed and decoded by participants in each category. Using the assistance of participants allowed me to identify and measure any content and perception that may exist through different perceptual understandings while ensuring that the interpretation and/or information being decoded was not limited to a single perspective.

The study's approach involved randomizing the participant selection process, resulting in two segmented groups: Category 1 participants and Category 2 participants. These two groups acted as comparative resources regarding the content and classification of LRE content and previous LRE research. The data from these participants were crucial for identifying learning patterns and behaviors and determining whether participants from separate groups drew similar results regarding article classification.

Category 1 participants were those over the age of 18 who had not attended any introductory LRE coursework at a community college or university within the year prior to participating. Participants in this category were selected randomly through a website link outlining the study guidelines. The website had an entry survey where participants selected their category guidelines. The system guided participants to a disclaimer page where they acknowledged the terms and conditions. Personal contact information, email

addresses, and IP addresses were not recorded. After acknowledging the disclaimer, participants proceeded to answer questions based on a snippet of LRE content or a previous LRE research study. The snippet did not exceed 2-3 paragraphs, and participants' responses were recorded and scaled automatically.

Category 2 Participants were those who had recently been enrolled in an introductory law-related educational course at a community college or university. Selection for this group involved sharing a link with community colleges and/or universities, asking instructors to distribute it to potential participants. The process mirrored that of Category 1 Participants, but Category 2 Participants answered questions based on the content used in their coursework. This comparison was necessary for understanding how exposure to newer content can shape content classification processes and whether perceptual understanding patterns were similar among participants exposed to similar content.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design and rationale for this study were based on a perceptual identification process, which involved identifying perceptual understanding as it relates to exposure to law-related education (LRE) concepts. When considering the establishment and potential development of a Law-Related Education Public Policy (LREPP), it was necessary to first identify a demonstrated public need for such a policy, as well as to understand existing stakeholder perceptions. These factors were relevant to the development of an LREPP because the creation of public policy requires both a clearly identified need and an understanding of current perceptual frameworks.

Guided by the study's research questions, this research aimed to understand the social and emotional impact that an LREPP may have on K–12 learners within the California educational system and to examine the economic benefits and/or disadvantages associated with mandating law-related education. To address these aims, the study examined prior research, existing content, and stakeholder perceptions regarding whether LRE content should be mandated and implemented within the current educational system as a foundational core curriculum component aligned with existing California Common Core standards.

This study was grounded in a content analysis approach to better understand the social and emotional impacts associated with the absence of mandated LRE within K–12 learning environments. The phenomenon examined involved determining whether individuals underexposed to LRE, either in the home or educational settings, were provided inequitable access to foundational educational knowledge necessary for understanding societal expectations and civic engagement. A conceptual framework and content analysis methodology were used to identify qualitative connections across existing research and educational materials (Elo, 2014).

Using this approach, the researcher analyzed previously collected data sets spanning more than 25 years. These data were grouped into three comparative timelines: 1998–2008, 2006–2016, and 2017–present. This structure allowed for comparisons across historical LRE studies, educational public policy guidelines, Common Core implementation under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and relevant case law to assess potential indicators of success for future LREPP development.

As identified in the introduction, participants in this study functioned as coders and assisted in decoding and classifying LRE-related content. Category 1 coders analyzed previous LRE studies and foundational content, while Category 2 coders conducted content analysis on LRE materials used within their recent university coursework. This distinction was necessary because the researcher did not have direct access to instructional materials used in current college-level LRE courses. Eligibility for Category 2 coding required enrollment within one year prior to participation.

This content analysis process captured historical narratives, educational perspectives, and social and economic reflections relevant to contemporary LRE discourse. Both manifest and latent content from prior studies, curricular materials, and course content were examined to identify potential educational growth opportunities and risks for K–12 learners within California educational settings (Drisko, 2016). Given that no prior research has examined the development of an LREPP, this study relied on existing LRE literature and educational materials to identify potential future trends and implications related to the establishment of a law-related education public policy.

Role of the Researcher

To understand the significance of how information was absorbed and processed, this qualitative study analyzed and compared coder responses from Category 1 and Category 2 participants to identify perceptual understanding patterns, similarities, and differences related to societal development, identification, comprehension, and cognition, as they pertain to the potential need for the development of a Law-Related Education Public Policy (LREPP). Data obtained from participants within each coding category

were compared to historical statistical data to examine possible correlations regarding whether law-related education within a K–12 setting may have potential to reduce juvenile delinquent behaviors and/or arrests.

Using a qualitative approach supported the examination of perception, perspective, and reflection, allowing coders to draw upon prior personal experiences and knowledge to draw conclusions from the articles and textual information they analyzed, whether they were selected at random or invited to participate as Category 2 coders. This information was used to identify potential benefits and risks that may be associated with the creation and implementation of an LREPP within the California K–12 educational setting.

At the time of this study, California did not have a state-created law-related education requirement or public policy integrating this learning component as a core curriculum requirement. However, this study examined whether an LREPP could be considered a foundational curriculum component based on the role of schools as centralized systems for distributing information necessary for future societal participation. Comparative data generated through this research were used to assess current public perception regarding the implementation of a law-related education curriculum across K–12 grade levels.

To identify trends, opportunities, risks, and threats presented within this study, the research questions were used to examine perceptual understandings and their relationship to the potential development of an LREPP to support the implementation of law-related education within K–12 settings.

RQ1: How can the establishment of a Law Related Education Policy influence a student's social and emotional development?

RQ2: What economic benefits and/or disadvantages are created by mandating a law related education for grade levels K-12?

Understanding the Qualitative Study Approach

This research aimed to use a qualitative approach to collect and record data using a digital survey tool. Participants were classified within two categories. The first classification included random individuals who were provided with information about educational laws or previous studies of LRE programs to review and provide their perspective on. The digital survey tool for participants in Category 1 comprised questions asking them to provide their analysis and overall understanding of what they believed the article was conveying. The series of questions that followed asked the participants to reflect on whether the information they read within the article was easy to understand, if they had a clear understanding, and if they did not have a clear understanding of the information shared, whether they would want to have a clearer understanding.

The purpose of these generalized questions was to understand and identify the correlation between the information being given, the information being studied, and how that information was perceived and understood. The random selection of participants in Category 1 aimed to identify patterns among individuals who may have no or some understanding of legal concepts but had not been regularly introduced to such concepts within the past calendar year at a community college or university; those with some or mild understanding of legal concepts but who had not been regularly introduced to them

in a similar timeframe; and those knowledgeable in legal concepts but who had not been regularly exposed to such concepts within the same timeframe.

The separation between Category 1 participants and Category 2 participants was intended to measure the impact of daily routines and school-like environments on the perceptual understanding of legal concepts for individuals not regularly exposed compared to those who were. It was through this analysis and comparison that potential data impacts either supporting or not supporting the development of an LREPP were expected to be revealed.

Participant Selection

All participants in this study were required to be over the age of 18. Participants were classified into two groups. Participant selection for Category 1 was conducted at random. Participants within this category had to be over the age of 18 and could not have recently taken an introductory course at a community college or local university within one calendar year that was recognized as associated with a law-related educational study. Selection for Category 2 participants was based on students who were over the age of 18 and had been enrolled in an introductory course at a community college or local university within one calendar year, taking coursework recognized as associated with a law-related educational study.

Participants in Category 1 were asked for the name of the article, California Educational Public Policy, or the name of the LRE they were asked to provide an analysis of. Participants in Category 2 were asked to identify the name of the recent course they participated in, the foundational educational book used for their law-related educational

study at their community college or university, and their survey questionnaire addressed the content analysis of the initial unknown material that would later be compared to historical data sets and research.

The next step of this research involved obtaining approval for this plan. Once approved, it was the researcher's responsibility to begin soliciting participants for Category 1, while also reaching out to three community colleges or universities within the State of California to request permission for students who met the Category 2 identification markers to participate in the structured survey. It should be noted that only participants in Category 1 were provided articles and data sets to analyze, while Category 2 participants debriefed information they had been taught within their respective college courses. The identification of this random variable acted as a foundational catalyst to expedite the understanding of a perceptual generalized overview of public opinion and perspectives of individuals within the Category 2 selection, either supporting or opposing the identification and/or need for public perception as it pertained to the development of law-related education. Although the educational resources and/or materials were not listed initially in this proposal, they were identified at the beginning and end of the study, as Category 2 participants would identify, code, and decode information related to materials from 2017 to the present. The older materials segmented for this research belonged to Category 1 participants, as these individuals were chosen at random and provided with articles pertaining to timelines that fell within the earlier two segmented stage categories previously mentioned in the earlier stages of this proposal.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation that will be used for this research will be Google Forms. This tool will be used to survey a participant response to analyze and compare data sets shared. Participants will be provided with a link that is associated with their respected category. Each categorized participant will provide a response to their assigned questions. However, Category 1 Participants will be assigned questions which are more specific to generate a response to information learned and/or acquired during the article distribution phase. Based on the responses received, each response will be manually decoded by the researcher to outline and highlight the responses provided by each participant. As participants provide their answers, the decoding process will help the researcher identify how the content was being analyzed, interpreted and relayed by coders. In addition, this data will allow the researcher to identify trends, social behaviors, and social interpretations as it pertains to whether there is a positive or negative interpretation regarding the creation of an LREPP for current California K-12 school systems.

Procedure for Data Collection

The procedural approach used to conduct this study involved dividing participants into two categories. Category 1 Participants were composed of individuals who were selected at random, were over the age of 18, and had not attended any community college or university courses related to a law-related education study program within one calendar year prior to participating in the study that was located within the State of California. Category 2 Participants were composed of random individuals who were 18

years of age and who had currently or previously attended a community college or university where they participated in a law-related study program.

All participants within Category 1 were assigned LRE materials, information about educational law or public policy related to educational rights and state core curriculum requirements, or articles through a Google Form and Google Sheets. Participants' responses to the form were automatically recorded and classified with the questions. As each participant read the article, they decoded the overall generalization of what the article meant, its application, their interpretation, and whether they felt there was a purpose for an LRE based on the information interpreted from the assigned article. The questions assigned to each participant were as follows, apart from question 9, which divided users based on the type of article they decoded and debriefed on. The survey questions assigned were:

1. What was the title of the article/case study/ or public policy that you reviewed?
2. What is your assigned coding number?
3. What day did you decode this article?
4. How long did it take you to read this article?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. From the dropdown select the field you work in:
7. Using the dropdown menu, which answer would summarize what your article was about?

8. In 5 sentences or less, briefly explain and/or identify the key points of this article and/or its intended purpose:
9. Did you find this article relevant to current educational strategies and easy to understand?
10. In review of this article did it discuss a law related to education and/or a law related to educational policy?
 - Section (A): If you answered “NO” to question #9, would you be willing to decode an additional article/policy which pertains to the implementation of a law related to curriculum and/or education within a K-12 setting?
 - Section (B): If you answered “Yes” to question 9, please briefly summarize in 5 sentences or less the key points of this article/policy and its correlation to a law related to educational policy and/or curriculum.
11. Would you say you had a clear understanding of the information the article provided?
12. Was there any aspect of the document you did not understand?
13. In your opinion, do you think California Schools should offer an educational study that is geared towards teaching students about the law?
14. In 5 sentences or less explain why you believe it would or would not be a good idea to teach students in grades K-12 about the law and/or their legal responsibilities.

Depending on how a participant answered Question 9, it determined whether the participant continued or was finished moving forward. Participants within Category 2,

however, were given a separate survey since the information derived from them was based on their recent learning experience and interpretation of their recent coursework in an introductory law-related college class. This survey was not as extensive but provided participants within this category with an initial Study Consent Form that they had to acknowledge before beginning the actual survey. No student information or personal data was collected. The professors at the college or university simply asked students to volunteer anonymously by providing them with the link to the survey.

The questionnaire went through an initial “dummy test” to validate that an actual person was participating in the survey. This small test asked the participant to identify the date, name the college course they were recently enrolled in, and identify their college or university’s name. Once this portion of the survey was completed, participants identified within this category were advised to begin the survey, which consisted of 8 questions in total. These questions were identified as follows:

1. Using one of the predefined statements below, how would you rate your prior knowledge of the law, understanding the law, or your overall experience with the application of the law before participating in this course?
 - I had no prior knowledge of legal concepts and/or their application within society.
 - I had some prior knowledge of legal concepts and/or their application within society.
 - I had prior knowledge of legal concepts and/or their application within society.

- I had extensive prior knowledge of legal concepts and/or their application within society.
2. In 5 sentences or less, briefly explain and/or identify some of the key points or highlighted information you learned about the law when taking this course:
 3. On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate your experience as it pertains to your legal knowledge acquired on this course (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest)
 4. On a scale of 1-3 brief rate if you would look forward to taking another law related course at your community college or university. 1= Yes, 2= Maybe, 3= No
 5. In 5 sentences or less please describe if there was any information you learned in your current law related course that you feel could have been beneficial to have learned in grade school. (Grade School meaning “Kindergarten-12th Grade”) Note: If you do not feel there was any information you learned in your course that would have been beneficial to know in “grade school” then please enter a response of “NA” instead. Participants only need to highlight 1-2 things which they feel would have been beneficial to know.
 6. Please select the grade level you would have liked this information to have been introduced to you at:
 - K-5th Grade (Elementary School)
 - 6th-8th (Middle School)
 - 9th-12th (High School)

- N/A- I did not provide an answer to the question above.
7. In your opinion, do you think California K-12 grade schools should offer an educational course that is geared towards teaching students' basic information about the law?
 8. In 5 sentences or less explain why you believe it would or would not be a good idea to teach students in grades K-12 about the law and/or their legal responsibilities.

Again, the identification module of this category aimed to identify groups and/or patterns of various content materials with which individuals would identify and/or relate as it pertained to patterns of understanding regarding key concepts of building an LREPP that would mandate LRE studies within a K-12 setting. Utilizing the perspectives and perceptions of a group who, over an extensive period, had the opportunity to learn and/or identify such concepts, showed significant value in comparison to an individual who was being introduced to such concepts for the first time.

The data sources for this study were based on using a survey method. This method recorded each participant's responses to their assigned category questionnaire. The purpose of this data collection was to record a generalized overview of participant perception as it pertained to their educational understanding in regard to the development and implementation of a K-12 LRE within the State of California. It was through the results received from the categorized participants that researchers aimed to identify social trends, economic risks, educational development strategies, and public policy

implementation requirements necessary to implement a K-12 LRE with the current use of an LREPP.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process required the researcher to manually decode responses using a customized grading score system. Based on each participant's responses, the researcher had to manually review each response and decode the information into a generalized category scoring system. This coding system was used to identify similarities and differences between each group while also categorizing individual responses using a 1-4 scaled system. Each individual survey score was regrouped to identify individual similarities and differences that might have existed, while also identifying potential social trends represented between each group. As the results were identified and compared, the information gathered from each group and each individual participant helped to identify possible educational development strategies related to performance and understanding of LRE information and also assessed the potential success of an LREPP implementation. The analysis and interpretation of this data were crucial for understanding perceptual identification and educational developments for individuals at an older stage of life outside the K-12 learning system. Through this identification, the study aimed to create opportunities for reflection and assess information that could have been considered equally beneficial to a K-12 learning environment to better support students in societal development concerning their understanding of and exposure to legal systems and processes.

Due to the need to conduct a content analysis of public documents and manually transcribe information received from participants, it was noted that QDA Software systems were not deemed appropriate for this study. Much of the information needed to be transcribed by hand to identify developing themes and patterns. Google Forms was found to be the most appropriate tool for synthesizing data, with the data automatically transferred to a Google Sheet for immediate reporting and classification with an appropriate timestamp for each respondent's participation. The results from this sheet were automatically recorded and transferred to an Excel-like format that allowed for data encryption.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The issue of trustworthiness was mitigated throughout this process using a designated timestamp system that is automatically implemented when the digital form was submitted. The timestamp tracked submission using Google Sheets where the results were synthesized and scored using a predefined metric using a standard number scale. This scale scored the answers received by the participants in hopes of identifying any themes and/or patterns which may exist. It also established a process that ensured participants do not provide any unnecessary confidential information to be considered for this study. Additionally, this process also ensured that information transmitted throughout this transcription was encrypted to guarantee a secure experience. The primary objective of this study was to document the knowledge acquired by participants during the article decoding process, either as Category 1 participants or to better understand and identify the debriefing of legal concepts by Category 2 participants. Category 2 participants again

reflected on the information learned to provide insight into whether their high-level learning experience would have been beneficial if introduced to foundational concepts in a lower K-12 educational setting.

Summary

In summary, this research attempted to identify and understand two population groups who were either exposed and underexposed, as it pertained to LRE concepts within a K-12 setting and if the implementation of a LREPP would have provided any benefit to future younger generations. In using the content analysis approach this study took the opportunity to review previous LRE studies and their impacts throughout a 25-year period, analyzing data sets from 1998-2008, 2009-2019, and 2020-present day. The focus will be on the social and emotional impacts vs benefits, while attempting to understand patterns of data interpretation from previous research studies to compare to their adult learners who will be engaged as coders to assist with the decoding process of current LRE interpretations. Drawing comparisons, analyzing social and societal trends, and mapping out population risk factors will allow coders to reflect upon their own personal educational experiences to provide feedback as to whether a LREPP would have had a positive or negative effect on current learning K-12 educational settings within the State of California.

This research did not aim to create or identify an LRE curriculum, but rather identify whether there was a social desire and/or want for a LREPP to be implemented within current institutions to pursue and potentially advocate for the development of a

LRE policy that would require a mandate for LRE concepts to be taught underneath California Common Core Curriculum Guidelines for K-12 settings.

It should also be noted that Chapter 3 discussed the research design and methodology used to conduct this study. The researcher stated that using a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data sets was necessary to guide the study. Participants were classified into two categories: Category 1 Participants and Category 2 Participants. Category 1 Participants were randomly selected and had not recently taken an introductory course at a community college or local university within one calendar year. In contrast, Category 2 Participants were recent students over the age of 18 who had been enrolled in LRE coursework at a community college or university level within one calendar year. This study aimed to use digital survey tools to collect data from participants. The survey asked participants to provide their analysis and overall understanding of what they believed the article was conveying. The survey also asked participants to reflect on whether the information they read in the article was easy to understand, if they had a clear understanding, and if not, whether they would have wanted a clearer understanding.

In conclusion, the researcher of this study aimed to use the data collected from these research tools to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in how participants understood and perceived legal concepts. The researcher also sought to use the data to identify potential opportunities and/or disadvantages that could have existed if an LREPP were created or implemented for students within grades K-12. Chapter 4 of this research study discusses the results of the data analysis of what was found throughout the conduct

of this study. This included identifying patterns, similarities, and differences in how participants understood and perceived legal concepts and how the content they analyzed was categorized based on their personal understanding of this information. This chapter also discussed the potential opportunities and/or disadvantages that could have existed if an LREPP were created or implemented for students within grades K-12. The anticipated data sets revealed within this study included the results of the surveys conducted by participants for content analysis and categorization. It was within Chapter 4 that sufficient and substantial evidence was provided to support the claims made within this research, identifying both the positive and negative impacts, as well as the impact and limitations of the data concerning future findings regarding the implementation of an LREPP.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from two categories of participants who contributed to this study of LRE and perceptions of its potential value within K–12 settings. Category 1 consisted of students enrolled in introductory law-related coursework at community colleges and universities. Category 2 consisted of adult participants who reviewed and decoded selected articles, case studies, or public policies related to LRE.

A total of 12 Category 1 participants and 12 Category 2 participants completed the required components of the study. Although the number of responses was modest, small-*N* qualitative studies are widely recognized as appropriate when the goal is to explore perceptions, meaning-making, and conceptual understanding rather than statistical generalization. The intent of the current study aligned with that purpose: examining how individuals understand law-related concepts and how they perceive the benefits, limitations, and developmental appropriateness of LRE in K–12 education. Two complementary data sources were used:

- survey responses from Category 1 participants, who provided reflections on their prior legal knowledge, what they learned in their coursework, and whether such content would be beneficial at younger grade levels
- article/policy decoding surveys from Category 2 participants, who summarized key points from assigned materials and evaluated the relevance and comprehensibility of LRE content

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (to show frequencies and raw numbers) and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in participant responses. Throughout this chapter, tables are used in place of figures to present descriptive data. This change was made in accordance with evaluator feedback noting that percentages alone lacked clarity given the small sample size. The tables presented include raw numbers to allow more meaningful interpretation. This chapter also includes expanded narrative to ensure full understanding of participants' responses, along with thematic analyses derived from open-ended responses.

Thematic Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis was conducted using an iterative qualitative review process to identify patterns and recurring concepts within the coded data. Following data collection, participant responses and classified content were reviewed multiple times to support familiarization with the data set. Initial descriptive codes were assigned to segments of text that reflected recurring ideas, perceptions, or interpretations related to LRE concepts.

Once initial coding was completed, codes were examined for conceptual similarity and grouped into broader categories. These categories were then refined into emergent themes through comparison across participant categories. This process allowed for the identification of shared and divergent patterns in how participants interpreted and classified LRE-related content.

Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal consistency and distinction between categories. Comparative analysis across Category 1 and Category 2 coders was used to evaluate whether exposure to prior LRE coursework influenced content

interpretation and thematic development. Representative excerpts and coded responses were retained to support the identification of themes and to ensure that findings reflected the underlying data.

Content Analysis Data

Content analysis was conducted in two phases. For Category 1 participants, analysis focused on identifying key concepts students reported learning in their legal coursework, their prior legal knowledge, and their perceptions of the benefits of introducing such content in K–12 schools. For Category 2 participants, content analysis examined their ability to summarize the key points of the articles or policies they decoded, their comprehension of the material, their assessment of its relevance to current educational practice, and their opinions about whether LRE should be incorporated into schools.

Across both participant groups, repeated patterns were identified in areas such as comprehension, perceived relevance, developmental appropriateness, civic responsibility, and potential benefits or limitations of LRE. These patterns formed the basis for the thematic findings presented later in this chapter. All data was collected remotely using structured online surveys. Participants completed the surveys independently in their own environments, without researcher intervention. No participants reported issues accessing or completing the surveys. Because the study did not require in-person interaction, the setting did not impose constraints that would affect the validity of findings. All responses were recorded anonymously and securely.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the study's participants are presented in two groups: Category 1 and Category 2. Category 1 participants consisted of college students enrolled in introductory law-related coursework, representing a range of educational backgrounds, occupational fields, and prior exposure to legal concepts. Category 2 participants consisted of adults who decoded articles, policies, or case studies related to law-related education and represented diverse educational levels and professional roles. Presenting the demographic characteristics of each group provides context for interpreting the study's findings and understanding the range of perspectives represented in the data.

Category 1 Participant Demographics

Category 1 participants demonstrated diverse educational levels and professional backgrounds. Table 1 presents demographic characteristics.

Table 1*Category 1 Participant Demographics*

Demographic	Category	Frequency
Highest level of education	High school diploma	6
	Associate's degree	2
	Bachelor's degree	3
	Master's Degree	1
Employment field	Student	7
	Law enforcement	2
	Special education	2
	Undefined/other	1
Prior legal knowledge	No prior knowledge	4
	Some prior knowledge	5
	Prior knowledge	2
	Extensive prior knowledge	1

Category 2 Demographics

Category 2 participants represented a broader educational range and occupational fields. Table 2 summarizes these demographics.

Table 2*Category 2 Participant Demographics*

Demographic	Category	Frequency
Highest level of education	High school diploma	2
	Bachelor's degree	3
	Master's Degree	5
	Doctorate	2
Employment field	Special education	3
	General education	2
	Law enforcement	1
	Sales	2
	Undefined/other	4
Type of article reviewed	California educational guidelines	5
	Law-related educational study	6
	Case law review	1

The demographic profiles of both participant groups demonstrate a broad range of educational backgrounds, occupational fields, and levels of prior exposure to legal concepts. These variations provide important context for understanding the perspectives participants brought to the study, particularly regarding their interpretations of law-

related educational materials and their views on the appropriateness of introducing such content in K–12 settings. The following sections describe the procedures used to collect data from both categories of participants and outline the methods through which their responses were analyzed to address the study’s research questions.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through self-administered online surveys. Category 1 participants responded to questions about course content, their prior understanding of legal concepts, their reflections on what they learned, and whether such material would have been beneficial in earlier schooling. Category 2 participants completed an article/policy decoding survey assessing their comprehension of assigned materials, relevance to modern educational practice, and their opinions about incorporating LRE in K–12 settings.

The term “Unsure”, which appears throughout the dataset, represented

- indecision regarding developmental appropriateness,
- uncertainty due to insufficient prior exposure, or
- skipped responses where participants lacked confidence to select “yes” or “no.”

This clarification directly addresses evaluator concern about missing explanation for this category. All data were reviewed manually, checked for completeness, and analyzed using descriptive statistics along with qualitative coding procedures.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process consisted of both descriptive and qualitative analytic techniques aligned with the structure of the two participant groups in this study. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize demographic characteristics and the frequency of participant responses, with raw numbers presented in tables to ensure clarity given the small sample size. Qualitative thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses from both Category 1 and Category 2 participants to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and perceptions related to law-related education. This structured analytic approach provided a clear and organized method for examining participant understanding, engagement, and viewpoints, supporting the presentation of findings in a neutral and systematic manner consistent with Walden University requirements.

Descriptive Analysis

Given the small sample size, raw numbers rather than percentages were used to summarize participant responses. Tables were used in place of figures to ensure clearer interpretation and to align with evaluator recommendations.

Thematic Analysis

Open-ended responses were analyzed to identify repeated ideas and patterns across participants. Three major themes emerged from the data:

- increased understanding of legal processes and structures
- developmental appropriateness and timing of LRE
- perceived benefits and concerns regarding LRE implementation

These themes are expanded upon in the sections that follow.

Category 1 Participants

Category 1 participants consisted of 12 college students enrolled in introductory law-related coursework at the time of the study. These individuals represented a range of educational levels, professional backgrounds, and varying degrees of prior exposure to legal concepts. Their responses provide insight into how students currently engaging with foundational legal instruction perceive the relevance, usefulness, and developmental appropriateness of law-related education. The following table summarizes the demographic characteristics of Category 1 participants as context for interpreting their contributions to the study.

Participant Engagement and Educational Background

Category 1 participants represented a range of academic levels, from high school graduates to individuals with master's degrees. Most participants (n = 10) reported gaining new or expanded legal knowledge from their introductory coursework (see Table 3). Participants frequently identified key legal topics such as juvenile versus adult justice systems, constitutional rights, Miranda rights, government structures, voting rights, and case-based applications of law as central components of their learning experience.

Table 3*Self-Rated Course Experience (Category 1)*

Rating	Interpretation	Frequency
1	Strong dislike	0
2	Moderate dislike	0
3	Neutral	3
4	Medium interest	4
5	High interest	5

Article Selection and Understanding

Participants demonstrated varied but generally successful levels of comprehension of legal concepts. Individuals with prior exposure to legal terminology or concepts (n = 7) articulated clearer explanations, while those with limited or no prior exposure (n = 4) still demonstrated meaningful understanding after completing their coursework.

Commonly identified takeaways included the purpose of juvenile justice distinctions, constitutional protections, the role of precedent, the influence of governmental processes on legal outcomes, and the relationship between rights and responsibilities.

Perceived Benefits of Law-Related Education

Participants overwhelmingly expressed that legal knowledge would have been beneficial if introduced earlier in their educational experience. Preferred grade levels for introducing law-related education are presented in Table 4.

Table 4*Preferred Grade Level for LRE Introduction (Category 1)*

Grade level	Frequency
K-5	5
6-8	3
9-12	4
No answer	0

Survey Participation in Additional Articles

Several participants (n = 4) expressed willingness to review additional materials if available. Other participants did not request additional content, and none declined due to difficulty understanding the initial survey. These responses suggest that the survey design and materials were accessible and appropriately structured.

Identification of Errors

Responses from Category 1 participants revealed no significant misunderstandings of the legal concepts presented in their coursework. Minor inaccuracies occurred in two cases, which appeared related to limited prior exposure rather than conceptual confusion. No evidence indicated widespread misunderstanding or issues with survey clarity.

Summary

Overall, the responses from Category 1 participants provided consistent insight into their engagement with introductory legal coursework, their understanding of

foundational legal concepts, and their perspectives on the value of introducing such content earlier in the K–12 curriculum. These findings offer an important baseline for comparison with the perspectives of Category 2 participants, whose experiences were shaped by the analysis of assigned articles and policies related to law-related education. The following section presents the results from Category 2 participants.

Category 2 Participants

Category 2 participants consisted of 12 adults who completed a decoding task involving an article, policy, or case study related to law-related education. These participants represented diverse educational and occupational backgrounds, including general education, special education, law enforcement, sales, and other civilian professions. Their varied levels of familiarity with legal concepts contributed to a broad range of interpretations and perspectives regarding the clarity, relevance, and accessibility of the materials they reviewed. Demographic characteristics for this group were previously presented in Table 2 in the Demographics section. The following subsections present the results for Category 2 participants.

Educational Background

Participants in Category 2 reflected a wide range of formal educational attainments, including high school diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral-level preparation. This variety contributed to differing levels of comfort with academic language, policy analysis, and legal terminology. Participants with advanced degrees generally demonstrated higher confidence in interpreting complex educational guidelines or legal-type material, while those with less formal education approached the

material more cautiously but still provided meaningful responses. Overall, the educational diversity within this group supported a broad range of perspectives related to law-related education.

Prior Knowledge

Participants demonstrated varying levels of prior exposure to legal concepts, which influenced their comprehension of the assigned material. Most participants (n = 9) reported clear understanding of their assigned article, while a smaller number (n = 3) expressed confusion or partial understanding. Table 5 summarizes comprehension levels.

Table 5

Comprehension of Assigned Materials (Category 2)

Comprehension level	Frequency
Understood clearly (1)	9
Mild confusion (2)	1
Understood with detail (3)	1
Misinterpretation (4)	1

Participants reviewed material related to educational guidelines, law-related education studies, or case law. Their responses demonstrated an ability to identify central themes such as civic readiness, educational equity, legal rights, and curriculum expectations. Many participants highlighted the importance of preparing children for democratic participation, understanding the legal implications of educational governance, and ensuring that students develop awareness of rights and responsibilities. While overall

comprehension was strong, several participants noted that some of the academic language or policy references required careful reading or interpretation.

Perceived Benefits of Legal Education

Most participants expressed support for integrating law-related education into the K–12 curriculum, emphasizing perceived benefits such as enhanced civic awareness, improved understanding of rights and responsibilities, and stronger critical-thinking skills. Table 6 presents the distribution of responses regarding whether LRE should be included in California schools.

Table 6

Support for Teaching LRE in California Schools (Category 2)

Response	Frequency
Yes	8
No	1
Unsure	3

Recommendations for Educational Implementation

Participants suggested that LRE should be introduced in gradual, developmentally appropriate stages, beginning with foundational concepts in elementary school and increasing in complexity throughout middle and high school. Several participants emphasized the need for teacher training to ensure instruction is accurate, unbiased, and aligned with standardized curriculum guidelines. Additional recommendations included

incorporating real-world examples, simplifying terminology, and creating opportunities for interactive learning such as mock trials, debates, or case-based discussions.

Challenges and Considerations

Participants identified several challenges related to implementing LRE in K–12 classrooms. Common concerns included the cognitive readiness of younger students, the potential for inadvertent political or ideological bias, and the complexity of certain legal terminology or processes. Some participants noted that without clear curriculum standards, teachers may struggle to balance thorough instruction with age-appropriate delivery. These considerations underscore the importance of thoughtful curriculum design and adequate teacher preparation.

Summary

Overall, the responses from Category 2 participants provided detailed insight into how adults interpret, evaluate, and reflect on law-related educational materials. Their perspectives highlighted both the potential benefits of introducing legal concepts in K–12 education and the practical and developmental considerations necessary for effective implementation. Together with the findings from Category 1 participants, these results contribute to a comprehensive understanding of participant attitudes toward law-related education and inform the integrated summary that follows.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study through a descriptive and thematic analysis of responses from two participant groups: Category 1 college students enrolled in introductory law-related coursework and Category 2 adults who decoded articles,

policies, or case studies related to law-related education. Demographic information for both groups showed varied educational backgrounds, employment fields, and levels of prior exposure to legal concepts, providing context for the results. Data collection was conducted through online surveys, and responses were analyzed using descriptive methods to present raw frequencies and thematic analysis to identify repeated concepts across open-ended responses. Three major themes emerged across both participant groups: (a) increased understanding of basic legal processes and structures, (b) varied perspectives on the developmental appropriateness and timing of law-related education, and (c) perceived benefits and considerations associated with introducing legal concepts in K–12 settings.

Category 1 participants demonstrated strong engagement with their coursework, reported meaningful learning of foundational legal concepts, and expressed broad support for introducing legal instruction earlier in the K–12 system. Category 2 participants showed diverse levels of comprehension of their assigned materials and generally endorsed the value of law-related education, while also identifying practical considerations and challenges relevant to age-appropriate implementation. Taken together, the findings from both participant groups provided a comprehensive overview of participant understanding, engagement, and perspectives regarding law-related education. These results form the basis for the interpretation, implications, and recommendations that are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine participant perspectives on the value, relevance, and developmental appropriateness of introducing LRE into K–12 school settings. As legal issues increasingly intersect with the everyday lives of young people, schools are positioned to play a critical role in strengthening students’ foundational understanding of rights, responsibilities, civic processes, and the implications of legal decision making. This study explored how individuals with varying educational backgrounds interpreted legal content and evaluated its benefits, challenges, and potential impact on children. Two research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How can the establishment of an LRE policy influence a student’s social and emotional development?

RQ2: What economic benefits and/or disadvantages are created by mandating a law-related education for grade levels K–12?

To address these questions, I analyzed survey responses from two distinct participant groups: Category 1 college students enrolled in introductory law-related coursework and Category 2 adults who decoded articles, policies, or case studies related to LRE. Chapter 4 presented the descriptive and thematic results derived from these responses. Chapter 5 integrates and interprets those findings, connects them to the existing literature and conceptual framework, identifies study limitations, offers recommendations, and discusses implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of Findings

Interpretation in this chapter is limited to conclusions supported by the data presented in Chapter 4, consistent with Walden University guidelines.

Interpretation Related to RQ1: Social and Emotional Development

Across both categories of participants, findings indicated general agreement that exposure to legal concepts supports several dimensions of social and emotional development in school-age children. These findings align with themes identified in Chapter 4 as well as prior research suggesting that early instruction in law-related concepts can strengthen students' self-awareness, decision making, and conflict-resolution skills. Participant responses indicated that exposure to LRE was perceived as supportive of multiple aspects of students' social and emotional development.

Participants frequently emphasized that understanding legal processes, rights, and responsibilities could help students develop greater awareness of consequences and make more informed decisions regarding their actions. Many participants also viewed LRE as a mechanism for strengthening civic awareness and responsibility by helping students understand legal boundaries, civic duties, and the structure of government. In addition, participants noted that instructional strategies commonly associated with LRE, such as analyzing scenarios, reviewing case examples, and interpreting rules, may enhance critical thinking, logical reasoning, and problem-solving skills. Several Category 1 participants highlighted the potential value of LRE for vulnerable student populations, including at-risk youths, foster youths, and students with limited prior guidance on legal matters.

Collectively, these findings support the conclusion that LRE has perceived potential to positively influence students' social and emotional growth by promoting awareness, responsibility, and reflective decision-making. Because this study relied on adult perceptions rather than measuring outcomes in students, these interpretations should be viewed as participant-informed insights rather than empirical demonstrations of LRE's direct effects.

Interpretation Related to RQ2: Economic Benefits and Disadvantages

Participant responses also provided perspectives on the economic implications of implementing LRE in K–12 schools. While this study did not conduct cost analysis, participants highlighted several perceived benefits and challenges that reflect themes documented in existing educational policy literature.

Participant responses also reflected perceived economic benefits associated with implementing law-related education in K–12 settings. Although this study did not include a formal cost analysis, participants suggested that early exposure to legal concepts could contribute to long-term cost avoidance by reducing behaviors associated with legal infractions, court involvement, and disciplinary interventions. Participants further noted that increased civic and legal awareness may support workforce readiness and informed economic participation by equipping students with foundational knowledge relevant to societal and professional environments.

Participants also identified potential economic challenges related to the implementation of LRE. These included the need for specialized teacher training, which could increase district-level costs, and the development of accurate, age-appropriate

curriculum materials across grade levels. Additionally, participants expressed concerns regarding variability in district resources, noting that schools with limited funding may face greater implementation challenges, raising potential equity considerations. In summary, participants viewed LRE as offering potential long-term societal and economic benefits, though they recognized that implementation would require initial financial investment and careful planning to ensure equitable access.

Limitations of the Study

This study included several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Generalizability

The sample size was small and drawn from two specific groups of adults, limiting the extent to which findings may apply to broader populations. The demographic composition reflected limited geographic information, and results cannot be generalized to students, teachers, or districts at large.

Trustworthiness

The study relied on preexisting data collected through anonymous online surveys, limiting the researcher's ability to probe deeper into participant answers or clarify ambiguous responses. Additionally, the secondary nature of the analysis meant the researcher did not control the original environment or context in which responses were provided.

Validity

Because the data were not originally collected to answer the exact research questions used in this dissertation, alignment challenges existed. Although survey responses addressed participant perspectives on legal concepts and educational practice, some variables relevant to economic impact and developmental effects were not explicitly measured.

Reliability

Survey responses varied in depth, clarity, and structure, making standardization difficult. Participant interpretation of questions may have differed, and the absence of consistent scoring rubrics in the original data collection process limited the ability to ensure uniform reliability across responses.

Additional Considerations

Some survey responses included missing or incomplete entries, and the self-paced online format may have influenced participant engagement. As with all perception-based studies, responses reflect personal opinions rather than measured behavioral outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Conduct primary research with K–12 students: Direct measurement of the social and emotional effects of LRE implementation would provide stronger evidence than relying solely on adult perceptions.
2. Explore teacher preparedness and training needs: Future studies should examine how teachers understand LRE concepts and identify the supports necessary for effective implementation.

3. Perform a cost–benefit analysis: A formal analysis could evaluate projected expenditures for materials, professional development, and long-term economic impacts.
4. Investigate developmentally appropriate models of LRE: Research comparing how students at different grade levels understand and engage with legal concepts would support curriculum design.
5. Examine implementation across diverse districts: Because participants raised concerns about equity, future studies should explore LRE feasibility in urban, rural, underserved, and well-resourced districts.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Introducing LRE into K–12 education has the potential to support positive social change at multiple levels.

Student Level

- increased awareness of legal rights and responsibilities
- improved decision-making, conflict resolution, and ethical reasoning
- greater preparedness for adulthood and civic participation

Family Level

- enhanced ability to engage in discussions about laws, rights, responsibilities, and community expectations
- increased empowerment when navigating legal or institutional systems

School/Organizational Level

- more informed and cohesive classroom environments

- stronger alignment between education and civic engagement goals
- opportunities to integrate real-world problem-solving into curriculum

Societal and Policy Level

- potential reduction in misunderstandings that lead to legal conflict
- increased civic awareness and participation over time
- support for the development of a more informed and equitable society

These implications suggest that LRE may meaningfully contribute to positive social change when implemented with attention to developmental appropriateness, teacher readiness, and equitable access across diverse school settings.

Conclusion

This study examined adult perceptions of the value and feasibility of introducing law-related education in K–12 settings. Participants expressed strong support for teaching foundational legal concepts earlier in schooling and highlighted potential social, emotional, and civic benefits for students. Participants also identified economic considerations and implementation challenges, emphasizing the importance of teacher training, curriculum development, and equitable resources.

Although limitations restrict generalizability, this study provides insight into how diverse adults interpret the purpose and potential impact of LRE. Future research involving teachers, policymakers, and K–12 students would expand the evidence base and support more informed decision-making. Establishing a stronger understanding of LRE’s benefits, challenges, and practical requirements can contribute to policies that

strengthen civic awareness, promote responsible decision-making, and support equitable educational practices across school communities.

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Appendix: Policy Brief Memo

Title: Empowering Future Generations: Integrating Law-Related Education into K-12 Curricula

Background / Context and Importance of the Problem

Statement of the Problem: Despite the increasing complexity of legal and social issues in today's world, many students graduate from K-12 education with limited understanding of fundamental legal concepts. This gap in knowledge can hinder their ability to make informed decisions, understand their rights and responsibilities, and engage effectively in civic life.

Root Causes: The absence of law-related education in early school years stems from several factors, including a lack of standardized curriculum requirements, insufficient teacher training in legal topics, and competing academic priorities. Many educational systems do not prioritize legal literacy, resulting in missed opportunities for students to develop critical skills and knowledge about the legal system and its impact on their daily lives.

Significance of the Problem: The lack of legal education contributes to a lower level of civic engagement and can exacerbate issues such as juvenile delinquency and misunderstanding of legal rights. Studies have shown that students with a better grasp of legal concepts are more likely to engage in positive civic behaviors and make informed decisions. Furthermore, providing early exposure to legal education can foster a sense of responsibility and better prepare students for active citizenship.

Policy Recommendations

1. Curriculum Integration:

- a. **Action:** Develop and implement a standardized LRE curriculum that integrates legal concepts into existing subjects such as social studies, history, and ethics.
- b. **Justification:** This approach ensures that students receive consistent and comprehensive legal education across different grade levels without overloading the existing curriculum.

2. Teacher Training:

- a. **Action:** Provide specialized training for teachers on legal concepts and effective methods for teaching law-related content.
- b. **Justification:** Equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and resources will enhance the quality of legal education and ensure that students receive accurate and engaging instruction.

3. Educational Materials:

- a. **Action:** Create and distribute age-appropriate legal education materials and resources, including textbooks, interactive modules, and online resources.
- b. **Justification:** Accessible and relevant materials will support teachers in delivering engaging lessons and help students understand complex legal concepts.

4. Pilot Programs and Evaluation:

- a. **Action:** Launch pilot programs in select schools to test and refine the LRE curriculum and teaching methods.
- b. **Justification:** Pilot programs allow for real-world testing and adjustments based on feedback before a broader rollout, ensuring the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed changes.

5. Community and Parental Involvement:

- a. **Action:** Engage community leaders, legal professionals, and parents in supporting and advocating for the integration of legal education.
- b. **Justification:** Building support from various stakeholders can enhance the program's acceptance and success, ensuring that the benefits of legal education extend beyond the classroom.

6. Promote Economic Inclusion

- a. **Action:** Create job programs focusing on internships, apprenticeships, and entry-level positions for young people. Governments should partner with local schools and businesses to offer tax incentives for hiring youth workers. These programs would integrate Law-Related Education (LRE) concepts into the workplace, reinforcing what students have learned in traditional K-12 educational settings.
- b. **Justification:** Providing equal access to opportunities that emphasize LRE concepts helps reduce social disparities and promotes social mobility. This approach enables young people to advance based on their skills and

foundational knowledge, creating stronger, more cohesive work environments and minimizing risks or threats to organizations.

In conclusion, the integration of Law-Related Education (LRE) into K-12 curricula presents a compelling opportunity for enhancing students' understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities. By adopting the proposed policy recommendations, educational institutions can foster greater civic awareness, encourage responsible decision-making, and contribute to the development of a more informed and engaged citizenry. The potential benefits of this approach extend beyond individual learning outcomes, impacting families, organizations, and society by promoting legal literacy and civic responsibility. As we move forward, it is crucial to consider the insights and evidence presented in this policy brief to guide the implementation of LRE, ensuring that educational practices evolve to meet the needs of our students and contribute to positive social changes.