



CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION

EDUCATING TOMORROW'S CITIZENS

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LOS ANGELES AND RUSSIAN STUDENTS DISCUSS FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

Constitutional Rights Foundation Deliberating in a Democracy Program Reaches Across Borders to Teach Civic Education

LOS ANGELES, CA — December 11, 2008— The Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) has partnered with the Museum of Tolerance and the Center for Preservation of Democracy to launch a series of student conferences as part of CRF's Deliberating in a Democracy Program (DID). Today is the third of the conferences and includes high school students from throughout Los Angeles County including Bell Gardens and Schurr from Montebello Unified, Franklin from LA Unified, Glendale from Glendale Unified and Malibu from Malibu Unified School Districts.

The goals of the conferences are threefold:

1. To provide students from both countries the opportunity to utilize newly acquired civic skills and knowledge gained through their participation in DID.
2. To connect students to each other and enhance their perspective through cultural and academic interactions via videoconference and face-to-face events.
3. To provide professional development to teachers who will learn new techniques for teaching civic education.

Today's unique conference will take place at the Museum of Tolerance. A portion of the conference will be dedicated to a digital videoconference between LA students and Russian students from various schools in Moscow. During the videoconference that begins at 8:30 a.m., all of the students will discuss prepared questions involving issues related to democracy and civic education. After the videoconference, LA students and teachers will participate in a civic deliberation: ***Should our Democracy permit hate speech?***

Students will break into two groups, one visiting the Point of View Diner (an exhibit at the Museum about cyber bullying) and other visiting the Confronting Hate Exhibit (an exhibit about how technology plays an important role in promoting hate through the internet). Students will also discuss ways to address these issues back at their respective schools.

The LA based teachers participating in the conference have been a part of the DID project for 2-3 years. Each year, new students from the 10th, 11th and 12th grades are introduced to the DID program.

“I have been involved with “Deliberating in a Democracy” from its beginning and it has proven itself to be one of the best civic education programs I've encountered in my 35 years of teaching. The program could not have been more important this election year - helping to create a sense of making sense about issues...my students have developed into better listeners, less judgmental participants in our democracy, and have made strides in their ability to maintain an open mind,” says Stephen Anderson, a teacher at Schurr High School in Montebello

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Awards #Q304A040003 and Q304A07000. Deliberating in a Democracy is a major six year international initiative designed to improve student understanding of democratic principles and the skills of civic deliberation.

Deliberating in a Democracy’s overall goal is to increase the knowledge and ability of teachers and students to effectively participate in deliberations related to democratic principles as applied in their countries. The emphasis is on a direct person-to-person exchange of ideas and experiences to give people a much clearer picture of democracy in action. In 2007–2008 over 200 teachers engaged more than 5,000 secondary students in authentic civic deliberations across the United States and in Eastern Europe, Russia and Azerbaijan.

About CRF: Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) seeks to instill in our nation's youth a deeper understanding of citizenship through values expressed in our Constitution and its Bill of Rights and to educate young people to become active and responsible participants in our society. CRF is dedicated to assuring our country's future by investing in our youth today. For more information about CRF, visit www.crf-usa.org.