



Los Angeles County

# Commission on Human Relations

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## **The Road to Peace, Respect and Academic Excellence: Becoming a “Zerohour School”**

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations believes that all schools should provide safe, culturally-appropriate learning environments for students to achieve academic excellence and develop healthy life skills. When a student perceives that her/his cultural knowledge or heritage is not valued by the larger society, when students feel harassed because of prejudice against them – whether it’s based on disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, race, language, or immigration status – their ability to learn is compromised.

Integrating human relations into the culture of a campus involves consistent and varied strategies to raise awareness and educate on our differences so that we may value our collective strength and build community. Strategies to improve human relations on campus should reflect the needs and voices of all campus stakeholders from the student body to the surrounding community. As a result, tactics to improve human relations may vary depending on issue, area, or audience. However, it is essential to engage all levels of the campus community in a holistic and inclusive process.

Schools that demonstrate long-term commitment to developing human relations are eligible to become a part of the Commission’s County-wide network of “Zerohour Schools.” These distinguished schools will be listed on the Commission’s website and recognized formally by County officials, receive priority registration at zerohour-sponsored trainings and events, personalized technical assistance from expert human relations consultants, human relations teaching tools, youth-friendly educational/outreach materials, access to the Commission’s many networks of non-profits and service-providers specializing in human relations work, and assistance in obtaining resources for human relations programs and training. A school’s zerohour designation will be reviewed and certified each year by the Commission.

**To become a “Zerohour School,” administrators, staff, teachers, and students must make a commitment to implement the following requirements:**

1. School-wide Commitment to Peace and Respect for All Groups: The school must agree to adopt a school-wide commitment to peace and respect for all, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, language, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, etc.. This commitment should be displayed in written form throughout the campus in visible places accessible to all campus community members and visitors. To further demonstrate this commitment, each campus should design an awareness campaign to send out frequent messages and reminders of an institutional and personal commitment to diversity, respect and peace. This campaign should launch at the start of the school year/track and be followed up by consistent reminders throughout the year. The campaign might involve posters,

rallies/assemblies, pledges/contracts, in-class human relations curricula, etc. Some schools have required all campus community members including parents/guardians to sign such contracts.

2. Develop Human Relations Leadership Among Students: The school must agree to help establish a campus-based student organization or support an existing one that is dedicated to diversity, non-violence and fostering a healthy, non-discriminatory environment on campus. This student organization would be designated as one of the Commission's Campus Action Teams (CAT), receiving year-long technical assistance and access to activities and events organized exclusively for the Commission's zerohour county-wide network of Campus Action Teams. The Commission also offers young people from the Campus Action Teams opportunities to publish their articles in our new, semi-annual zerohour 'zine' (magazine) which will be distributed to youth throughout the County.
3. Strengthen Parent/Guardian Communication and Involvement: The school must agree to provide open forums for communication and educational opportunities with parents/guardians. The Commission encourages schools to develop strong parent advisory groups that allow parents/guardians to interact with community based organizations and government agencies on a consistent basis to address the needs of the campus and surrounding community (e.g., eliminating prejudice in the home, participating in safe passage programs, increasing after-school youth programs, improving community-law enforcement relations, increasing access to mental health services, etc.).
4. Provide Opportunities for Human Relations Teacher Trainings: The school must agree to support and encourage its teachers with opportunities for zerohour-approved human relations institutes and skills-building trainings. From cultural sensitivity training to developing standards-based curricula with human relations themes, teachers should be encouraged by the administration to attend appropriate human relations conferences, trainings, summits and events. Together with Facing History and Ourselves, for example, the County Commission has helped conduct training for teachers to discuss difficult social and interracial issues within the context of standards-based history, social science, language and language arts curricula. The Commission is also staffed with professionals capable of working with teachers to incorporate a number of human relations themes into their lesson plans.
5. Support and Implement Zerohour-approved Curricula and Human Relations Classes and Programs: The school must support in-class programming providing students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of diversity, build leadership and interpersonal skills and strengthen their commitment to human relations. The Commission believes that integrating human relations concepts into existing curriculum is critical in order to infuse the principles and values of diversity, inclusion, and respect into student and faculty learning. Many human relations organizations offer support in developing standards-based human relations lesson plans and tools for teachers to integrate into all subject areas.

**In addition, the Commission recommends that school communities consider the following programs and policies in order to promote positive intergroup relations on their campuses:**

Community Dialogue: The Commission believes a series of action/solutions-oriented dialogues with the key school stakeholders is important in order to help school administrators identify and address the intergroup relations issues at the school. Promoting sustained dialogue among students, teachers, parents, administration and staff will allow key stakeholders in the school community to effectively communicate and support each other as well as offer a continued assessment of the school climate, e.g., School-based human relations committee, “Town Hall” meetings, Principal’s Student Advisory, etc..

Forming a School Collaborative: The Commission believes that school collaboratives, led by school administrators, can help develop leadership within the school community to identify, raise awareness, plan and take action on intergroup challenges facing the school community. Collaboratives should include students, teachers, parents, district leaders, law enforcement, community organizations (e.g. gang prevention organizations), and relevant government agencies (e.g., the Commission, L.A. City Human Relations Commission, Department of Justice Community Relations Service, elected local gov’t representatives, etc.). School collaboratives should meet regularly in order to serve effectively as a vehicle for ongoing coordination and communication between school and stakeholders.

Collaborate with Local Non-Profit Agencies Providing Human Relations Services: The Commission has developed partnerships with many other organizations to provide trainings and curricula to schools, e.g., the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), Leadership Development Intergroup Relations (LDIR), the Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center (APADRC), and the Anti-Defamation league (ADL). In addition, the Commission can support the implementation of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) “Mix it Up” program that promotes dialogue and interaction among all students on campus. *Please see our list of human relations resources.*

### **Ways the Commission can help...**

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations offers advice, assistance, and technical support to all groups interested in addressing intergroup issues in their school community. The Commission often provides workshops on bias, discrimination and service learning projects that promote positive relations and respect on campus, such as schoolwide mini-symposiums, and school assemblies using entertainment figures to promote respect and appreciation for all. The Commission also provides zerohour gear, such as t-shirts, stickers, posters, action packets, and the website ([www.LAhumanrelations.org/zerohour](http://www.LAhumanrelations.org/zerohour)) to those individuals seeking to take action on their campuses. Lastly, the Commission can also assist school administrators in working with the media, as well as serve as “media coaches” to promote positive public relations for the school community.

For further assistance with development or implementation of a zerohour plan of action for your school, please contact the zerohour team at the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations at 213-974-7629, or go to [www.LAHumanRelations.org](http://www.LAHumanRelations.org).