***Teaching about World Religions using the AAR Pedagogical Competencies***

***“Scavenger Hunt”***

The objective of this modified “Scavenger Hunt” is to familiarize you with the World Religions identified in the OACS, understand the key issues and challenges faced with teaching about this content in public schools, and identifying appropriate resources, best practices and skills to effectively teach about World religions. We will use the Pedagogical Competencies outlined in the AAR document

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Pedagogical Competencies*** | ***Explore/Research/Reflect*** | ***Application*** |
| ***Station 1 (20 points)***   * Identify the OACS that focus on World Religions * Be able to find and recognize appropriate resources about religion when needed, on the Internet or in more traditional media. | ***Identify the OACS.***  *Geography*  *Human Systems*  Human systems represent the settlement and structures created by people on Earth’s surface. The growth, distribution and movements of people are driving forces behind human and physical events. Geographers study patterns in cultures and the changes that result from human processes, migrations and the diffusion of new cultural traits.  *8. Modern cultural practices and products show the influence of tradition and diffusion, including the impact of major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism).*  ***Then develop an annotated bibliography: Identify 3 Resources for each of the world religions(incl. young adolescent literature): Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism***  **Buddhism**   * (2003). *Understanding World Religions: What is Buddhism?* [DVD]. United States: Schlessinger Media.   *DVD:* This DVD is included in a series of DVDs to be shown in classrooms to students featuring world religions. It gives a detailed look at Buddhism and its history dating back over 2,500 years. Viewers will learn about Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, and his teachings. A family is featured in the video that show their practices as they visit a Buddhist temple and worship in their home. Information about traditions and beliefs are given through interviews with monks and nuns.   * Marchant, K. (2002). The Buddha and Buddhism. Minnesota: Smart Apple Media.   *Content Area Book:* The Buddhist religion is broken down and explained in the book. Details about the life of Buddha, the teachings, the sacred text and places, the festivals are explained throughout this book. There is also a section devoted to Buddhism today.   * Perry, M. L. (2008). *Taneesha Never Disparaging*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.   *Adolescent Literature:* Eleven-year-old Taneesha’s school year isn’t off to a great start. She is being teased and tormented because of her choice of friends, her Buddhist religion, and her dreary campaign for class president. Taneesha's fifth-grade school year proves to be disappointing until she learns to make peace with herself and those around her.  **Hinduism**   * (2003). *Understanding World Religions: What is Hinduism?* [DVD]. United States: Schlessinger Media.   *DVD:* This DVD is included in a series of DVDs featuring world religions to be shown in classrooms to students. It gives a detailed look at Hinduism and its history. Viewers will learn about history of the Hindu faith with its roots in the ancient Indus River Valley civilization. Viewers see a visit to a Hindu temple where a priest performs a prayer ritual. A family is featured in the video that show their preparation for their holiday of Diwali. Hindu dancers help tell important stories of religious tradition.   * Arenson, R. (2000). *Manu and the Talking Fish.* New York: Barefoot Books.   *Adolescent Literature:* This is a Hindu myth of the ancient Indian story of Manu, who is rewarded when he saves the life of a little fish. The fish, who is really the god Brahma in disguise, tells him what he must do to save himself and the world from destruction in the coming flood.   * Zucher, J. (2004). *Lighting a Lamp: A Diwali Story.* New York: Barron’s Educational Series, Inc.   *Adolescent Literature:* This is a simple picture book that introduces the Hindu festival of Diwali. This story follows a family as they prepare and celebrate their Hindu tradition of the festival of lights.  **Islam**   * 2002). Religions of the World: Our World Faiths. [DVD]. United States: Entertainment Programs, Inc.   *DVD:* This animated video introduces Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism & Sufism by using easy, accessible stories from the worlds literary, musical & religious heritages. It is geared toward teaching understanding and tolerance toward different faiths to children ages 5 all the way to adults. The section on Islam features a 15-minute animated introducing the life of Mohammed shown with friends and colleagues recalling incidents where their lived mixed with Mohammed’s.   * Addasi, M. (2010). *Time to Pray*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Boyds Mills Press.   *Adolescent Literature*: This picture book follows young Yasmin on her visit to her grandmother’s house in the Middle East. Her grandmother teaches her the Muslim's daily prayers, makes her special prayer clothes, and gives a gift that will help Yasmin remember when to pray when she travels back home to her family. The book includes a section about prayer customs.   * Marx, T. (2010). *Sharing Our Homeland: Palestinian and Jewish Children at Summer Camp*. New York: Lee & Low Books Inc.   *Photo-Essay*: This book shares the experiences of two Israeli children, one Jewish and one Palestinian, who spend two weeks in the summer a Peace Camp. In spite of their differences and the longstanding conflicts in the region, children at this camp learn to play, work, and share ideas together at a day camp located in Israel.  **Christianity**   * (2003). *Understanding World Religions: What is Christianity?* [DVD]. United States: Schlessinger Media.   *DVD:* This DVD is included in a series of DVDs about the different religions to be shown in classrooms to students. It gives a detailed look at Christianity and investigates that history and the teachings of Jesus. Viewers visit a Christian family as they prepare for Christmas and visit a Christian church. There is an explanation of traditions and beliefs through interviews with ministers and priests.   * Brown, A. (2002). *Jesus and Christianity.* Minnesota: Smart Apple Media.   *Content Area Book:* The Christina religion is broken down and explained in the book. Details about the life of Jesus, the teachings, the sacred text and places, the festivals are explained throughout this book. There is also a section devoted to Christianity today.     * (2002). *Religions of the World: Our World Faiths.* [DVD]. United States: Entertainment Programs, Inc.   *DVD:* This animated video introduces Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism & Sufism by using easy, accessible stories from the worlds literary, musical & religious heritages. It is geared toward teaching understanding and tolerance toward different faiths to children ages 5 all the way to adults. The section on Christianity features a 15-minute animated film with depictions of the life of Christ by followers recalling past events of just who and what Jesus was.  **Judaism**   * Melmed, L.K. (2010). *Eight Winter Nights: A Family Hanukkah Book*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.   *Adolescent Literature:* This picture book describes the symbols, foods, and family fun associated with the festival of Hanukkah through short poetic verses. It also includes facts about the history and traditions of Judaism.   * Keene, M. (2006). *Judaism*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: World Almanac Library.   *Content Book:* This book is part of the series “Religions of the World.” This series looks at the five major religions have shaped human culture and spiritual life and fostered both conflict and peace throughout history. This volume features information at the origin of Judaism, its principal teachings, scriptures, important figures, historical events, festivals, places of worship, and community life. It includes a section on Jewish life and practice in today’s society.   * (2002). *Religions of the World: Our World Faiths.* [DVD]. United States: Entertainment Programs, Inc.   *DVD:* This animated video introduces Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism & Sufism by using easy, accessible stories from the worlds literary, musical & religious heritages. It is geared toward teaching understanding and tolerance toward different faiths to children ages 5 all the way to adults. The section on Judaism features a 15-minute animated film where a grandfather relates the story of Moses to his granddaughter, using items on the Passover table as gateways into different parts of the story. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  **Buddhism**  Buddhism is based on the teaching and example of the Buddha, an Indian Prince named Siddhartha Gautama. About 2,500 years ago, Gautama became “Enlightened” as he found the answers to the affects of suffering in life and what caused suffering and how it could be ended. His teaching included encouraging followers to look at their actions and their effect on others, and a lifestyle that would reduce suffering and would help to reach Enlightenment. These teachings, called the Dharma, were based on what was necessary, not on what is luxurious or full of hardship. This was also referred to as The Middle Way, which is based on the Four Noble Truths: 1) All life is suffering, 2) The cause of suffering is craving, 3) There can be a release from craving, and 4) The way to release is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path teaches Buddhists how to overcome greed and hatred and how to lead better lives.  **Hinduism**  Hinduism is possibly the oldest living religion in the world. This religion has no easy definition as it embraces many traditions and has a vast array of practices and beliefs. Its emphasis is on personal spirituality. Most Hindus believe in a Supreme God and follow a body of texts as sacred scripture known as the Veda and other supplements to it. Hindus believe in the existence in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth governed by Karma. They believe that the soul passes through a successive life cycle and the incarnation is dependent on how one lived in their previous life. There is no single founder or commonly agreed upon teachings to the Hindu religion. It is referred to as a ‘way of life’ or ‘a family of religions.’  **Islam**  Islam was founded about 1,400 years ago when the Prophet Muhammad received revelations from God that he was to be the messenger to recite and spread God’s word. These revelations have been written in the holy book, the Qur’an. Followers of the Islamic religion are called Muslims. This religion is a way of life, forming and guiding followers’ entire culture and society. There are five basic duties or requirements in this religion called the Five Pillars of Islam. These pillars include 1) Professing faith, 2) Praying, 3) Helping the needy, 4) Fasting, and 5) Pilgrimage. Praying is a big part of Muslims daily lives as it gives them structure in their lives. Praying is done five times a day turning toward Mecca, their holy land where they take their pilgrimage. Praying can be done at home or in a mosque.    **Christianity**  This history of Christianity is focused on the life, death and resurrection of one person, Jesus Christ, the son of God. Jesus’ birth is believed to be the fulfillment of prophecies in the Jewish Old Testament, which claimed that a Messiah would deliver the Jewish people from captivity. Not much is know about Jesus other than his birth until he was about 30. Jesus spent three years teaching the word of God through parables. He had 12 disciples who helped him with his work. Because Jesus Christ claimed he spoke with the authority of God, he was tried for heresy and put to death by crucifixion. The next Sunday he was resurrected believed to be raised from the dead by God. Christians believe in one God but that God has three elements: God the Father, God the Son, and The Holy Spirit. Their sacred text is the Christian Bible divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Christians worship in a church and their spiritual leaders are either priests or ministers.  **Judaism**  Judaism began about 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia. Abraham is known as the founding father of Judaism. He came to believe in one God who created the world and controlled human history, even though all the people around him worshiped more than one God. The holy book of the Jewish people is the Torah, the first five books of the Jewish Scriptures. It contains stories about the history of early Jewish people, commandments and rules, poems, and sayings about life. The Torah is divided in sections and is read throughout the year in the synagogue from beginning to end. This is the source of holiness and eternal life, also taught by the Jewish rabbi. |
| ***Station 2 (15 points)***   * Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others. * Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion. * Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way. | ***Highlight at least 2 key points from the reading that addresses each of these competencies***   * *Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.*   In order to be able to do this, teachers must be educated and knowledgeable about the world religions. The AAR Guidelines suggest that “in order to effectively include the study of religions in K-12 curricula, teachers must be prepared to do so” (AAR, 2010, pg. 18). To do this, teachers have a variety of choices. They can follow the AAR guidelines and “Content Competencies” listed in their article on pages 18-19. In addition, teachers can attend seminars or workshops to gain further knowledge on religions around the world. By doing this, teachers will be better prepared to lead discussion with students about the beliefs and practices of different religions.   * *Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.* * *Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.*   By setting the context of the lesson and making it clear that the lesson is 1) academically based and appropriate to be taught in public schools and 2) that the students realize the purpose is to teach about religion to have a better understanding of the “religious deminsions of human experience, not to promote religion or a particular religious perspective” (AAR, 2010, pg 11) this allows the teacher to lead students in discussion regarding religious beliefs and practices. It also always for best practice as it is setting the goal for the lesson and allowing for students to have an expectation of what is to come.“Articulating the distinction between religious studies and a devotional approach to religion at the outset of a lesson or unit will clarify educational goals and minimize confusion and anxiety” (AAR, 2010, pg. 11).   * *Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.*   In order to do this, teacher must find resources outside of the textbook to deepen the perspectives of each religion. “Minimally, teachers are encouraged to supplement such charts with culturally diverse and historically situated examples of religious practices that will help challenge the static and ahistorical depction of religion that this common resource promotes (AAR, 2010, pg. 11). | ***How can you incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***   * *Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.*   One way I can do this is to continue to gain knowledge about the world religions. I can take workshops, seminars, college courses, or simply just continue to read and research about the religions in order for me to be able to facilitate religion discussions in my classroom.   * *Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.*   I thinking setting the goal of discussions in the classroom and making students and parents away of the academic teaching of religion is a way I can incorporate a best practice into my classroom.   * *Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.*   I can do this by having a variety of unbiased and neutral resources in my classroom. Not only to present to my students in lessons, but also for them to use for research and independent readings. |
| ***Station 3 (15 points)***   * Understand the difference between the secular academic and devotional approaches to religion, and consistently use the secular academic approach. * Be able to address in a constructive way religious disagreements and conflicts that arise in the classroom. * Be aware of, and manage effectively, religious diversity in the classroom. * Create an environment of respect and tolerance—a safe environment in which students feel free to talk about religion. | ***The AAR guidelines outlines 4 Approaches to teaching religion (see pages 10-11). Which approach do you think you will follow? Why?***  Ideally, I would like to say that I would follow the cultural studies approach since it incorporates the dimensions all three approaches. However, I do not believe I currently have the knowledge and skills to teach this approach. It is something that I can work toward in the future. Since I am currently a language arts teacher, and do not see that changing anytime soon, I am going to base my approach on how I could utilize one of these approaches in my current situation. I inherently feel that the *Literacy Approach* would be the appropriate for my teaching. In this approach, students read a religious texts, novels, stories, or poetry and the teacher helps them “gain an appreciation of the way that religion infuses all aspects of culture by seeing how religious allusion and metaphor can become a common language that is shared by a people (AAR, 2010, pg. 10). By looking at a story with a religious theme, students can see individuals experience their own religion. By teaching a novel with religious themes, students begin to gain a literary value and how these texts can influence literary styles (pg. 10).  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  The competencies in Station 3 are listed under the “Pedagogical Competencies.” (pg. 19) These competencies are important to include in the study of religion within the curriculum. These competencies are needed “in order to effectively include the study of religion in K-12 curricula” (AAR, 2010, pg. 18). In order for me to include religious studies in my classroom, these competencies are necessary for me to include in my instruction. By including the competencies listed, I will be preparing myself to teach religious studies in constitutional way promoting religious literacy among my students. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  1. I will need to have a variety of appropriate resources in my classroom to allow students to learn about religion in an unbiased and academic way.  2. In order to implement some of the competencies listed, I will send letters home to parents addressing the topic of religion being studied in the classroom.  3. As the class begins its discussion about religion, creating a list of rules that students will follow during those discussions will help create an environment of respect and tolerance. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  As I reflect on the AAR document, I believe I learned a lot about teaching world religions in the classroom and have gained many tools and resources on how to do that in a constitutionally sound way. After the reading, I felt strongly about the incorporation of religion into the curriculum as long as it is done in a fair or neutral way and that it is academically, not devotionally based. There needs to be an awareness of different religions in order to understand our world today. I think this quote says how essential it is to have that exposure: “However, due to the widespread illiteracy about religion I the general population, exposure to even a single well-taught course in religious studies can dramatically enhance one’s understanding of, and appreciation for, the important role of religion in human experience” (pg. 20). By doing this, we can create a somewhat tolerant environment of young people, hopefully that can have more religious literacy and knowledge of the beliefs of different religions around the world. | ***How will you take all of the information you have gained from AAR and your research and make it comprehensible to your 6th graders? This is your “snapshot of practice” - provide at least 1 specific example of practice.***  ***Elementary School English Language Arts***  Before reading *Number the Stars* by Louis Lowery, pairs of students will be assigned different parts of the Jewish religion to research and discuss in small groups. Some topics to research and discover could be the Jewish New Year, the practices at a synagogue, Jewish persecution and possibly the spread of the Jewish communities around the world. Students would gain a better understanding of this religion through research and then would be able to apply to the reading and understand more about the individual feelings of characters in the novel. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |