***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

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| ***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.***  **G.L:** 6th Grade  **Standard:** History  **Organizer:** Chronology  **GLI:**  **1.** Construct a multiple-tier time line from a list of events and interpret the relationships between the events.  **Organizer:** Early Civilizations  **GLI:**  **4.** Compare the geographic, political, economic and social characteristics of the river civilizations in the Tigris and Euphrates (Mesopotamia), Nile (Egypt), Huang Ho and Indus valleys before 1000 B.C. including: a. Location; b. Government; c. Religion; d. Agriculture; e. Cultural and scientific contributions.  **Organizer:** The First Global Age **GLI:**  **5.** Describe the characteristics of Maya, Inca, Aztec and Mississippian civilizations including: a. Location; b. Government; c. Religion; d. Agriculture; e. Cultural and scientific contributions.  **Standard:** People in Societies  **Organizer**: Cultures  **GLI:**  **1.** Compare the cultural practices and products of the societies studied including: a. Class structure; b. Gender roles; c. Beliefs; d. Customs and traditions.  **2.** Compare world religions and belief systems focusing on geographic origins, founding leaders and teachings including: a. Buddhism; b. Christianity; c. Judaism;  d. Hinduism; e. Islam.  **Organizer:** Interaction  **GLI:**  **3.** Explain factors that foster conflict or cooperation among countries: a. Language; b. Religion; c. Types of government; d. Historic relationships; e. Economic interests.  **Standard:** Geography **Organizer:** Movement **GLI: 8.** Explain push and pull factors that cause people to migrate from place to place including: a. Oppression/Freedom; b. Poverty/Economic opportunity; c. Cultural ties; d. Political conflicts; e. Environmental factors  **Standard:** Social Studies Skills and Methods **Organizer:** Obtaining Information **GLI:** **1.** Use multiple sources to define essential vocabulary and obtain information for a research project including: a. Almanacs; b. Gazetteers; c. Trade books; d. Periodicals; e. Video tapes; f. Electronic sources.  **Organizer:** Thinking and Organizing **GLI:** **2.** Analyze information from primary and secondary sources in order to summarize, make generalizations and draw conclusions.  **3.** Organize information using outlines and graphic organizers.  **Organizer:** Communicating Info. **GLI:** **4.** Complete a research project that includes a bibliography.  **7.** Work effectively to achieve group goals: a. Engage in active listening; b. Provide feedback in a constructive manner; c. Help establish group goals; d. Take various roles within the group; e. Recognize contributions of others.  ***Then develop an annotated bibliography: Identify 3 Resources for each of the world religions(incl. young adolescent literature): Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism***  **Buddhism**  Koja, K. (2003). *Buddha Boy.* New York, NY: Frances Foster Books.  **Annotation:** This adolescent literature is a lesson on the judgment and marginalization of a boy, who is Buddhist. This boy’s name is Jinsen, but the kids call him “Buddha Boy,” because he has a shaved head, he wears oversize tie-dye dragon t-shirts, and he smiles a lot. After a boy named Justin is paired with him in class, he gets to know the *real* Jinsen. Will Justin choose to be friends with someone extraordinary or choose to “be cool.”  Religions: Buddhism. (2012). *BBC News.* Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/>  **Annotation:** This website is a reliable resource, which focuses on the Buddhist religion. First, it provides an overview of the religion and lists several facts. For example, it states that Buddhism is 2,500 years old and that Buddhism is a spiritual tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development. The second part of this websites goes into more detail about the following beliefs: The Four Noble Truths; Karma; The Wheel of Life; Jesus through Buddhist eyes; The Buddhist Universe. The next sections highlight the Buddhist ethics, customs, history, holy days, people, and subdivisions.  Thailand Jewel of the Orient: Basics of Buddhism. (1995-2012). *PBS*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>  **Annotation:** This is another dependable website that provides information on the Buddhist religion. First, it provides an overview, and then it discusses the history of Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha). Next, it explains the Four Noble Truths, Karma, and The Cycle of Rebirth.  **Hinduism**  Bosse, M. (1981). *Ordinary Magic*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.  **Annotation:** In the book, *Ordinary Magic*, a boy is born in India, but because of tragedy he is eventually uprooted from his home. After moving to the Midwest, his practices of Hinduism, Yoga, and mantras are considered alien and unaccepted.  Religions: Hinduism. (2012*). BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/>  **Annotation:** Similar to the BBC: Buddhism website, BBC also has websites for each of the world’s religions. The BBC: Hinduism section first provides a detailed glance at Hinduism. Next, it talks about concepts, such as Atman, Varna, Purushartha, Guru, Dharma, Karma and Samsara, and Brahman and God. The next section introduces the Deities or Hindu Gods. The rest of the sections consist of ethics, history, holy days, rites and rituals, texts, and worship practices.  (2012). *Hinduism Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/>  **Annotation:** This website provides the history and present day news of Hinduism. One part of this website answers ten questions about Hinduism, which would extremely useful to students. Another section of this website called “Education,” provides viewers with Hinduism history, core beliefs, and Hinduism resources. Also, this website offers a Magazine Web Edition. By clicking on “Current Issue,” it will take viewers to numerous Hinduism articles. Next, in order to get present day information, viewers are able to click the “News” section. There are many other components of this website that are informative and useful, such as the “People” and “Resources” tabs.  Whelan, G. (2000). *Homeless Bird.* New York, NY. HarperTrophy.  **Annotation:** This story is about a daring thirteen-year-old girl, who lives in India and lives within the strict Hindu culture. At this age she faces her arranged marriage with hope and courage, but somehow things go terribly wrong. A newspaper article that highlights the real thirteen-year-old girl, who widows in India today, inspired this book.  **Islamic**  Ellis, D. & Walters, E. (2007). *Bifocal*. Brighton, Massachusetts: Fitzhenry & Whiteside  **Annotation:** This book is based on true events, which makes it even more appealing. The story introduces Haroon, a young and devoted Muslim and Jay, a white kid, who is a rising football star. Amidst the atmosphere of racial tension both boys are set out on a journey of self-discovery.  Islam Empire of Faith. (2012). *PBS*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/>  **Annotation:** This excellent website offers viewers an array of resources. First, there is an interactive timeline of Islamic history. Next, since *Islam Empire of Faith* is a video, this site goes into more detail about it and recommends viewers to watch it. This website also offers additional information on the Islamic faith, culture, innovation, and profiles.  Religion Library: Islam. (2008-2012). Patheos Library. Retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Islam.html>  **Annotation:** This website goes into detail about the beginnings, influences, founders, sacred texts, and historical perspectives of the Islamic religion. Also, it highlights the early developments, schisms, and sects, missions and expansions, explorations and conquests, and the modern age of the Islam. Additionally, it provides detailed information about the Islamic beliefs, rituals, worship, ethics, and community.  **Christianity**  Barrow, M. Information on Christianity. *Woodland Junior School’s* *World Religion.* Retrieved from <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/christian.htm>  **Annotation:** This website would actually be extremely useful for the six World religions. However, I will only explain what I discovered within the “Christianity” section. This section of the website provides statistics of Christianity. Also, it lists facts of the place of origin, founder, sacred text/building, holy places, major festivals, and main denominations. In addition, this website explains who Jesus Christ is and who Christians are and what they believe. I was astounded by how much information each section of this website provided about each religion, in particular Christianity.  Christianity: Background, Basic Beliefs, and Sacred Texts. (2002). *United Religions Initiative Kids*. Retrieved from <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_chri_basi.htm>  **Annotation:** This is another website that provides information on all the world religions. The Christianity section of this site provides information on how Christianity began and what Christians believe. Also, it explains the sacred texts of Christians and the reason behind why there are so many different kinds of Christians.  Religions: Christianity. (2012) *BBC News.* Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/>  **Annotation:** The BBC website also gives information on the Christianity religion. First, it provides an overview of the religion and then it goes into detail about Christian beliefs. Also, this website teaches viewers about Christmas, ethics, history, holy days, people, and places. In addition, there are sections about The Pope, prayers, priests, monks, nuns, rituals, saints, subdivisions, symbols, texts, and women.  **Judaism**  Religion Library: Judaism. (2008-2012). Patheos Library. Retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Judaism.html>  **Annotation:** The *Patheos Library* has a lot of information on Judaism. This website provides knowledge on the origins, history, beliefs, rituals, worship, and ethics of Judaism.  Potok, C. (1982). The Chosen. New York, NY: Fawcett Crest.  **Annotation:** *The Chosen* is a story about two boys with two different backgrounds. One boy is a modern Orthodox Jew with an intellectual, Zionist father and the other is the son of a Hasidic rabbi. Despite their differences, they develop a deep friendship, where they endure adolescence and adulthood together with plenty of conflicts and exploration.  Religions: Judaism. (2012). BBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/>  **Annotation:** The BBC website also has a Judaism section, which provides an overview of the religion. Also, it details on Jewish beliefs and who Jesus is to a Jewish person. Next, this website informs viewers of customs, such as Sabbath, Tefillin, Eruvs, and Kippah. Lastly, this website explains the history of Judaism, the Holocaust, holy days, ethics, people, rites, subdivisions, texts, and worship. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion:***  **- Buddhism:** Buddhism began in Northeastern India and is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha). This religion is 2,500 years old and is followed by 350 million Buddhists. The sacred Buddhist text is the Tripitaka and the sacred building is called the Stupa. The different branches of Buddhism consist of Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese (Soto/Zen).  **- Hinduism:** About 4,000 years ago, Hinduism originated in Northern India, near Indus River. This is the world’s oldest existing religion and has 750 million followers. Hinduism was developed out of Brahmanism. Also, the sacred Hindu texts are Vedas and Upanishads. The Hindu religion is more of a practice rather than a belief. It is more about what you do that what you believe. However, they do believe in a universal God called the Brahman, who takes on many forms. Also, they believe that there is a part of the Brahman in everyone that is called the Atman.  **- Islam:** The Islam religion began in Arabia and has over a thousand million followers. The Prophet Muhammad revealed this religion to humanity. Those who follow Islam are called Muslims, who believe there is only one God called Allah. The sacred Islam text is called the Qur’an and the sacred building is a Mosque. The Muslims have six main beliefs: Allah is the one and only God; Angels; Holy books; Special Prophets; Day of Judgment; Predestination.  **- Christianity:** Christianity is the world’s largest religion, with about 2.2 billion followers. It is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died on the cross and rose from the dead. He did this to show everyone that there is another life with one, eternal, loving God. The Christian place to worship is called a Church and there are many denominations. The following are a list of Christian Denominations: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Anglicans, Amish, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterian, Quakers, Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists.  **-Judaism:** Judaism is the oldest of the world’s four main religions with only one God. Though it is the smallest with only 12 million followers. The Jewish history began with the covenant established between God and Abraham around 1812 B.C. Jewish people worship in Synagogues and the spiritual leaders are called Rabbis. The most holy Jewish book is the Torah, which contains the five books revealed to Moses by God (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The Jewish holy day, or Sabbath, starts at sunset on Friday and continues until sunset on Saturday. |
| ***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***   * *Below are two quotes from page 12 of the AAR Guidelines for Teaching About Religion. This quote really relates to “developing skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.” It is also represents a way for me to “develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair and neutral way.”* * “Talking about religion can touch the depth of someone’s identify, causing some discussions to feel like an attack, especially when based on misinformation and stereotypes. Therefore, it is imperative to foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty by encouraging other students to:   + Move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements.   + Examine how their judgments may impact others, and   + Explore ideas and ask questions without fear” (12). * “Not everyone in the class is expected to agree. But students should understand that:   + The goal is developing awareness and understanding; and   + Accurate representations of traditions reduce the misunderstandings arising from false generalizations, bigotry, or valorization of a particular religious or non-religious worldview” (12). * *The quote on page 18 is just a reminder that I will need professional development in order to be prepared to teach religion.* * “In order to effectively include the study of religion in K-12 curricula, teachers must be prepared to do so” (18). * *These are best practices that I picked up on within the reading.* * “ Brainstorming quickly can help students identify their most basic associations, those rooted in long experiences and snap judgment” (12). * By reflecting on their own preconceived ideas about religion, students can also think about how their ideas may stereotype and misjudge the beliefs and practices of others, including that of their own peers in the classroom or school” (12). * “Ms. X decides to do an oral storytelling unit… Each day she reads aloud a Native American story from different tribes to her class” (13). * “Students conclude by creating their own “Explorer’s Journals” in which they describe, through writing and illustration, the similarities and differences they saw between expressions of Islamic life…” (13). * “Mr. B and his class then discuss various places and objects that are central points in their own lives (school playground, churches, grocery stores, temples) and then write their own stories about all the different types of people who come there every day (14). | ***How can you incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***   * I think it is important for all students to feel comfortable enough to share their religion and traditions. In my classroom, I also think it is important for students to realize that since their religious views are different, there could be disagreements. A critical point when students are sharing beliefs and practices is to not push these on other students in the classroom. It is important for students to know the boundary lines. In my classroom, I would plan to break students up into different groups to discuss what their family religion is and what their traditions are. Even if two students have the same religion, they can discuss the differences between them. I believe that small groups will allow students to feel more comfortable and willing to share. Afterwards, the students and I will join back, as a whole group. I will take volunteers to share their religious beliefs and traditions. * An example of a best practice in teaching about religion is collaborative groups and open discussions. When students are researching world religions, they will be able to work in small groups. Also, these groups will come up with a presentation method to teach fellow peers about that particular religion. * In order to teach all religions in a fair and neutral way, it is important to discuss generalizations and enable students to explore each religion equally. For example, students should not spend a longer amount of time learning about Christianity (because the teacher is a Christian), rather than Buddhism or the Islam religions. Students should be able to explore each religion equally by creating artifacts that represent each and other hands-on activities. |
| ***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?***  If I were to teach religion, I would want to teach the “cultural studies approach.” My first response was going to be to integrate each of the approaches into my teaching methods; however, I realized that the cultural studies approach enhances those three and builds on it. The *AAR Guidelines for Teaching About Religion* explains that the cultural studies approach “enhances the other three approaches in its emphasis on recognizing the ways that religion is embedded in culture and cannot be understood in isolation from its particular social/historical expressions” (10). First, I really like the fact that this approach enhances the three other approaches. I think each have very useful methods that can be combined to create the cultural-studies approach, which I believe to be the effective. The historical approach focuses on the origins of a religion and its development, as well as the political and cultural influences, which are central to understanding how that religion emerged. The literacy approach allows students to “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 people” (10). As a language arts teacher, I think figurative language is effective way of helping students understand that religion is embedded in human political, cultural, and social life. Also, by reading stories that represent specific religions, students will realize that generalizations about religion are often inconsistent. Next, what I liked about the traditions-based approach is the emphasis on beliefs, texts, rituals, origins, holidays, and essential questions that religious address. These areas are the essence of religion and are how any religious group expresses themselves and their beliefs. The cultural studies approach adds even more “emphasis on recognizing the ways that religion is embedded in culture and cannot be understood in isolation from its particular social/historical expressions” (10). Also, I believe this approach is extremely effective, because it focuses on social power and the ways that race, class, and gender can be intertwined with cultural and political influences. Finally, one of the most important reasons why I would teach, using this approach is because “it requires training in religious studies and requires teachers to slow down and cover less content with more depth. As an educator, I want to be an expert in what I am teaching; therefore, I would expect to conduct an extensive research and/or take courses to better myself.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  Firstly, I understand that there is a huge difference between devotional beliefs and practices and the study of religion from an academic, secular frame of reference. When teaching a particular faith, the teacher would promote a particular theological worldview and encourage students to articulate values and adopt practices that are consistent with their set of beliefs. When teaching students the study of religion in a constitutionally appropriate way, the teacher will introduce the vast array of faith-based expressions that exist within and between traditions with the aim of deepening understanding about religions diversity (4).  Secondly, I will handle religious disagreements in the classroom by creating an open and respectful environment. I have learned that students should understand that “the goal is developing awareness and understanding; and accurate representations of traditions reduce the misunderstandings arising from false generalizations, bigotry, or valorization of a particular religious or non-religious worldview” (12).  The third competency I understood was how to handle religious diversity in the classroom. I learned how important it is to talk about religion without making generalizations and stereotypes. In addition, it is important for students and I to examine how our judgments may impact others.  The fourth competency was mentioned above and is essential when teaching the study of religion. When students know they can trust and respect one another, they will be more open to listen and embrace their differences. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  I will implement my approach and understanding into practice by first fostering a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty and by having students avoid generalizations and explore ideas and ask questions. A great way to allow students to share is through small group discussions and round group discussions. This is where students can share their beliefs and traditions with other students. If there are disagreements, it will be a wonderful opportunity for me (the teacher) to explain that we don’t have to believe or agree with other people’s beliefs; however, we should learn to listen and respect their different beliefs. After learning about each of the different traditions and beliefs in the classroom, students will hopefully gain a new appreciation for differences within the classroom. Before implementing the cultural studies approach, I will be sure to participate in a professional development seminar that focuses on religion. I want to be sure I am properly educated about different religions and free of generalized and stereotypical ideas. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  Reading the *AAR Guidelines for Teaching About Religion* was definitely one foot forward in my professional development. Before reading the AAR Guidelines, I felt unsure of the boundary lines when it came to teaching religion in the classroom. I was well aware that teaching or pushing my own religious beliefs is not allowed. Overall, I had a lot of feelings of discomfort when it came to the discussion of religion. It really is a sensitive subject that has many different viewpoints. The following statements are thoughts that have ran through my mind when students and I must discuss religion: Did I cross the line when talking about religion? Is it wrong to let students know of my religious beliefs? What if I said something to offend students? What if I am teaching about a students’ particular religion and I teach it incorrectly or differently than how they worship.  The above questions are very valid concerns that all teachers need to ask themselves. After reading the AAR Guidelines, my viewpoint of integrating religion into my curriculum has changed for the better. Each of my questions has been answered. Also, I now realize how essential it is to educate students about all religions. I understand that there is a clear difference between “devotional beliefs and practices and the study of religion from an academic, secular frame of reference” (4). In addition, I learned that if I am teaching all religions from an objective and educational approach, then I would not cross the boundary line. The only way it becomes inappropriate is if I push my own religious beliefs onto the students. Another reason why my viewpoint has changed is because I learned I must be very knowledgeable in each religion before teaching it. At this point, I am not prepared to teach religions, because I have not researched different sources. As an educator it is my job to have students explore the diverse, dynamic, and cultural world of religions. My knowledge and education of all religions will prevent me from teaching any religion based on generalizations and false information.  I strongly believe that it is essential to teach the study of religion in a constitutionally appropriate way. The reason I feel this way is because “there exists a widespread illiteracy about religion in the United States” (5). I want my students to become literate in religious traditions and expressions. These are the foundational practices in every religion. Also, in order to prevent religious illiteracy, I want students to become informed of religious leaders and believers and understand the idea that religions are diverse and evolving, not uniform and static. Another reason why I want to teach the study of religion in my classroom is because it will teach my students to be open to differences and create an open and safe community. Most likely, there will be students in my classroom with different religions. It is my goal to build a safe community so students can share their own traditions and knowledge with each other. I want to steer students away from being possible prejudice and antagonistic individuals. Also, I want to “promote respect for diversity, peaceful existence, and cooperative endeavors in local, national, and global arenas” (5) Overall, I want to enhance my students’ literacy about religion, because I know it can foster a better understanding among people of different faiths and worldviews. This important knowledge can “enrich civic dimensions of education and better prepare students for participation in democratic process in our multi-religious nation” (6). | ***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.***  After developing a respectful, safe, and honest learning environment, I will begin teaching world religion to my 6th graders. Before engaging in the project-based learning, students will brainstorm all religions. Individually, I will have students write down their knowledge or associations of each religion. For example, I will ask students to write down what they know and associate with Buddhism. Many students will write down Buddha, yoga, ying yang, Chinese people etc. Afterwards, we will identify these associations and snap judgment thoughts. I will explain that after this “World Religions” unit, they will discard those associations and become extremely knowledgeable about each of the world religions. During the World Religions project, students will be put into cooperative groups to do research on an assigned World Religion (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism). The students will gather information to make a presentation of their choice (poster, PowerPoint, brochure, movie). Within their presentation, they will first discuss the generalizations of that particular religion and how classmates can look past them. Overall, within this unit project, students will research world religions in books and on the internet (reliable sources) and identify the basic foundations of the world religions. Also, students will learn how to create a presentation type for their world religion and learn how to do an oral presentation on the world religions. During other classmates’ presentations, the students will be filling out their foldable graphic organizers. Another great idea for teaching religions is to have students create artifacts that depict the true representation of their particular religion of study. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |