***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. Then develop an annotated bibliography: Identify 3 Resources for each of the world religions(incl. young adolescent literature): Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism.***  **OACS:**  ***Geography Strand; Content Statement 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).***  **Buddhism:**  1) Web Resource: <http://www.buddhanet.net/>  -This is a website that is a Buddhist Education and Information network which provides resources and information for teaching about the Buddhist religion.  2) Web Resource: <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>  - This is another great website for the Buddhist race which gives answers to very frequently asked questions.  3) Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNRiFQdPl_I>  - This is an introduction video to the religion of Buddhism that would be great to use at the beginning of a lesson to engage students or at the end of a lesson to review what was learned during the lesson.  **Christianity:**  1) Web Resource: <http://www.gospelideals.org/what-is-christianity>  - This is a website which gives the basic ideals of Christianity. The information from this website is good background information to teach students who are unaware of Christianity.  2) Adolescent Literature/Trade Book: **The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe** by Clive Staples Lewis (1950)  -This is a fictional book about three children who find another world in their wardrobe. While this plot line does not directly show Christianity, the underlying themes of the book do relate to the beliefs and ideals of Christianity.  3) Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut-UOhY0s8E>  - This is an introduction video to Christianity that would be great to use at the beginning of a lesson to engage students or at the end of a lesson to review what was learned during the lesson.  **Hinduism:**  1) Web Resource: <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_hind_basi.htm>  - This is an informational website that answers frequently asked questions about the Hindu religion.  2) Web Resource: <http://firstschoolyears.com/re/hinduism/hinduism.htm>  -This website has several resources which could be used for beginners in the Hindu religion or for students who are simply interested in learning about the Hindu religion.  3) Adolescent Literature/Trade Book: **The Birth of the Ganga** by Harish Johari (1998)  - This is a picture book about a river goddess, Ganga who is often worshipped in the Hindu religion.  **Islam:**  1) Web Resource: <http://www.truthnet.org/islam/whatisislam.html>  - This is an informational website that discusses the history of the religion, Mohammad, and the religion today.  2) Web Resource: <http://www.besthistorysites.net/index.php/ancient-biblical-history/islam>  - This is a resource website for teachers. This website has different lesson plans and activities as well as information about the religion.  3) Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpcbfxtdoI8>  - This is an introduction video to the Islamic religion that would be great to use at the beginning of a lesson to engage students or at the end of a lesson to review what was learned during the lesson.  **Judaism:**  1) Adolescent Literature/Trade Book: **No One Must Know** by Eva Wiseman (2004)  -This book is about a young catholic girl who meets a young Jewish boy. She is afraid to tell her family about her new friend until she realizes that her family is also Jewish and has been pretending to be Catholic to survive in the surrounding society.  2) Web Resource: <http://www.jewfaq.org/index.shtml>  - This is an informational website that explains the basic principles of the Jewish religion.  3) Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzCoWo2eYGA>  - This is an introduction video to the Judaism religion that would be great to use at the beginning of a lesson to engage students or at the end of a lesson to review what was learned during the lesson. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion.***  **Buddhism:** To those who practice the religion of Buddhism it isn’t just a religion it is a way of life. Buddhists don’t worship a specific god or goddess but instead cherish ideas and beliefs left behind by their main leader Buddha which gave the religion its name.  **Christianity:** This is a religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Christianity is very popular in the Western Hemisphere and is centered on faith in Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God is the creator of the Universe and that Jesus Christ is the son of God who was sent to save man kind from their sins.  **Hinduism:** Hinduism is an ancient religion which began in India about 4,000 years ago. Those who practice Hinduism focus on their spirit and uniting their spirit with God. Generally they refer to their God as Brahman. Those who practice Hinduism believe in karma and incarnation which drives them to make better decisions in their every day life.  **Islam:** The Islam religion is based on the worship of the god, Allah. In this religion they study the Qur’an which is a book that contains the word of God (Allah). Those who study Islam also follow a major leader of the religion, Muhammad. There are five major pillars of the Islamic faith.  **Judaism:** This Judaism religion focuses more on actions than beliefs. There are 13 principles roughly laid out for the Judaism religion. This religion focuses on the study of the Torrah as their religious literature which includes the first five books of the Bible. |
| ***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.***  **Discussion:**  1) When discussing religious beliefs and practices it is important to avoid making generalizations. According to the American Academy of Religion, “Move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements—from, for example, ‘All Christians are intolerant’ to ‘I have heard that Christians are intolerant—is this true?’ Or to ‘Some Christians are intolerant’”  2) When discussing religious beliefs and practices, in addition to avoid making generalizations it is important to make sure that students understand the purpose of the discussion. American Academy of Religion states, “Not everyone in the class is expected to agree, but students should understand that the goal is developing awareness and understanding.”  **Best Practices:**  1) According to my research, one of the best practices for teaching religion is to have a, “Familiarity with the basic outlooks, experiences, and practices of the widespread living religious traditions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and of indigenous regional religions (religions of the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific), with special attention to the diversity of expressions and practices within as well as between religions and regions.” As a teacher, students look up to us as if we are a dictionary of information. Therefore, it is important to constantly have the basic information on the different subjects being taught.  2) Another key practice for teachers to use is to make sure that each of their lessons and activities is being implemented for an academic purpose as opposed to a devotional purpose. The American Academy of Religion outlines guidelines for teaching religion and one of those guidelines is to assure that, “The school’s approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.” If a teacher makes sure to maintain this practice then their teaching will be effective.  **Multiple Perspectives:**  1) As stated in the competency listed above, the American Academy agrees that a key pedagogical competency is to, “Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.” The ability to do this will increase the amount of knowledge and comprehension that can be gained in the classroom.  2) While presenting multiple perspectives it is inevitable that different opinions will arise during discussion. Therefore, the American Academy of Religion shares that it is important for educators to, “Be able to address in a constructive way religious disagreements and conflicts that arise in the classroom.” | ***How can you incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency.***  **Discussion:** I can incorporate these pieces of advice on discussion during an activity called the fish bowl activity. With this activity three chairs are placed in the middle of a circle of students. The teacher asks a question and then three students who have an opinion on that question sit in the chairs and begin a discussion. As students in the circle begin to think of comments they raise their hands and students in the chairs can switch them to allow a turn for their comments.  **Best Practices:** I can incorporate informational videos. Showing short videos allows an instructor the opportunity to engage students while still showing a familiarity to the religion from a purely academic perspective. It is important that the videos are short and quick though so that students do not lose interest.  **Multiple Perspectives:** A great way to incorporate multiple perspectives is to rotate students through stations. A new perspective or concept can be explored at each station. |
| ***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?***  As far as the four different approaches to teaching, I think that is difficult to pick one approach right now that I feel most comfortable with. The approach I choose to use will be chosen based upon the content I’m teaching and the situation I’m in at the time. At this point, I feel that I am most comfortable using the Historical approach. The Historical approach seems to be the safest approach to avoiding confrontation in the classroom. It allows the teacher to stick to facts of history and avoid too much opinion and confrontation of beliefs among students.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  After reading the AAR document I learned the difference between devotional and secular teaching of religion. Secular teaching requires the teaching of the information about a religion and its beliefs, practices, and ideals. Devotional teaching requires the teaching of processes and the encouragement of processes used by a certain faith.  When dealing with religious disagreements it is important to remember to avoid generalizations and create a safe environment where students are comfortable stating their own opinion. Then when disagreement does arise, students are comfortable with the idea of agreeing to disagree knowing that everyone has the right to their own opinion.  The best way to deal with religious diversity is similar to the concept discussed above. It is important to encourage students to feel respected and safe in the classroom and don’t allow students to become disrespectful in your classroom.  Start the school year by sharing that your classroom is a place for respect and encouragement of different opinions. If the students are used to this concept the entire year than it will be easy for them to continue this when the religious topic is brought up. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  1) I will implement a safe zone in my classroom from the beginning of the school year where opinions are welcome and everyone is respected.  2) I will encourage activities that teach information and do not involve practicing religions.  3) I can also have a safe zone jar where students are encouraged to write about times where they have felt uncomfortable and place it in the jar. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  After reading this document I feel like I have a much better idea of how to teach religion in a public school setting. I have learned how I can avoid teaching in a way that seems like I am pushing religion onto my students. I have learned ways to effectively teach about religion so that my students are comfortable in the classroom. I have also learned how to create a classroom environment that students feel comfortable and safe in. | ***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.***  I plan to take all of the information I have learned from this document to increase the learning, comprehension, and enjoyment of my students. With my knowledge of World Religions I will be able to promote effective learning and understanding of the different religions around the world. I hope that with my new knowledge I will also be able to do everything listed above in an enjoyable, hands-on way that allows me to keep my students engaged and excited about learning. For example, showing videos, rotating students through stations, and promoting discussion are three ways that I can make this possible. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |