***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. Then develop an annotated bibliography: Identify 3 Resources for each of the world religions(incl. young adolescent literature): Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism***  6th Grade Academic 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).   Annotated Bibliography/Resources:   * BUDDHISM   + *BBC religions: Buddhism*. (2012).   Retrieved from  <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>  buddhism/.  This website provides a great and unbiased overview of Buddhism. There is a section called “Buddism at a glance” that gives some general details. Then, you can expand the other sections to read more about Buddhism’s beliefs, ethics, customs, history, holy days, people, and subdivisions. These allow one to study the religion more in depth.   * + White, B. (1993). *Buddanet basic Buddhism*   *guide: A five minute introduction*. Retrieved from <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>.  This website, created by the Buddha Dharma Education Association, provides and introduction to Buddhism and everything the religion encompasses. Important aspects and ideas of the religion are explained. The Four Noble Truths and ideas of karma, wisdom, and compassion are discussed. Information on how to become a Buddhist is also included.   * + Nichtern, E. (2007). *One city: A declaration of*   *interdependence*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.  This young adult book is written by Ethan Nichtern, who created New York’s upstart Interdependence Project. Nichtern guides readers to see that there is beauty everywhere, even in urban areas. Using this urban setting, the truths of interdependence that Dr. Martin Luther King noted are explored. The novel combines Dr. King’s message with Buddhist wisdom to explain how people can live together peacefully no matter who or where you are.   * HINDUISM   + *BBC religions: Hinduism*. (2012). Retrieved from   http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/.  This website provides many unbiased details about the aspects of Hinduism. An overview of the religion can be found in the “At a Glance” section. More in depth information can be found in the sections labeled concepts, deities, ethics, history, holy days, rites and rituals, texts, and worship.   * + The major world religions. (2010). Retrieved from   http://www.omsakthi.org/religions.html.  This website provides a short introduction to many major religions. The short descriptions allow one to get a general idea about the religion and its basic beliefs and practices. This allows the religions to be compared at the basic level. Resources on each religion are provided after the description.   * + Jones, C. A., & Ryan, J. D. (2007). *Encyclopedia of hinduism*.   Facts on file.  This encyclopedia provides many thorough explanations and details relating to the Hinduism faith. Information is explained in a contemporary and understandable approach. This makes it a great resource for young adults. Many Hindu terms are defined in detail. There is also a thorough index, which makes this book a user-friendly source. Suggestions for further readings are provided for those wishing to study the topics more in depth.   * ISLAM   + *BBC religions: Islam*. (2012). Retrieved from   http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/.  This resource first provides very basic information about Islam in the “at a glance” section. Then, many different aspects of Islam are explored in detail. Within these explanations, there are images and sound clips that help aid understanding. Specific topics explored include arts and culture, beliefs, history, holy days, ethics, practices, prayer & worship, rites & rituals, subdivisions, and texts.   * + Ibrahim, I. A. (n.d.). *A brief illustrated guide to understanding*   *islam*. Retrieved from http://www.islam-guide.com/.  This website contains the book entitled *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam.* The purpose of this book and website is to help people understand more about Muslims, the Holy Quran, and Islam. It includes many details, images, and resources. The three chapters include evidence for the truth of Islam, benefits of Islam, and general information on Islam. It would be beneficial for students and teachers to review Chapter 3 – General Information on Islam. This explains what Islam is, basic Islamic beliefs, and offers answers to some common questions about the religion.   * + Husain, A. (2010). *Neither this nor that*. lulu.com.   This young adult novel tells the story of Fatima, a young American Muslim. Her parents came to the United States from India in the 1970’s. Fatima was born in the United States but is unsure if she really belongs. It seems like her Islamic morals and upbringing are in conflict with everything around her. Throughout the book, Fatima struggles to find out her true identity in the midst of the differing cultures that surround her.   * CHRISTIANITY   + *BBC religions: Christianity*. (2012). Retrieved from   http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity.  This website provides a great overview of the Christian religion. The site begins with some brief key details listed in the “at a glance” section. Aspects of the religion can then be studied more in depth through navigating through the different topics. The many different topics explored include beliefs, Christmas, ethics, history, holy days, people, places, the Pope, prayer and study, priests/monks/nuns, rites and rituals, saints, subdivisions, symbols, texts, and women. Images, sound clips, and additional resources are given for further information.   * + *Religious tolerance: Ontario consultants on religious tolerance*.   (2010). Retrieved from http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ1.htm.  This website explores Christianity more in depth through a variety of essays. It provides information about the diverse beliefs within the religion of Christianity. It also discusses how current beliefs and practices have changed over time. Some topics include the history of Jesus and Christianity, examples of diverse beliefs, defining who is a Christian, and methods through which Christians interpret the Bible.   * + Blume, J. (1988). *Are you there god? it's me, margaret*. (First   Trade Paperback Edition ed.). New York: Delacorte Press.  In Judy Blume’s young adult novel entitled, *Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret*, the main character, Margaret struggles with the difficulties of growing up and choosing a religion. Margaret’s one grandmother is Jewish and insists she is a Jewish girl while her maternal grandparents insist she is Christian because he mother is Christian. Her parents feel that she should remain undecided about her religion, while Margaret wants to make a decision regarding her religion so she is able to fit in socially. Readers follow Margaret’s thoughts and feelings as she understands more about growing up and about these two religions. This book could be used in the classroom to compare the religions of Christianity and Judaism.   * JUDAISM   + *BBC religions: Judaism*. (2012). Retrieved from   http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/.  This website provides a great deal of information about Judaism. Those looking for quick and basic details about the religion can look in the “at a glance” section. One can go to the various topics to read more in depth information regarding the religion. The variety of topics includes beliefs, customs, history, the Holocaust, holy days, ethics, people, rites, subdivisions, texts, and worship. Images, audio clips, and suggestions for further reading are included for each topic.   * + Rich, T. R. (2011). *Judaism 101*. Retrieved from   http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm.  This website is an online encyclopedia of Judaism. Information about Jewish beliefs, people, places, things, language, scripture, holidays, practices, and customs can be found here. Each topic is labeled as basic, intermediate, advanced, and gentile. This allows the teacher or students to choose the level of detail they feel comfortable with. As you click on each topic, one can view an in depth explanation. Each page also has a box in the upper right hand corner noting the key ideas that relate to the topic.   * + Frank, A. (1984). *Anne frank: The diary of a young girl*. Pocket   Books.  *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* is a collection of Anne Frank’s diary entries before and during the Holocaust. Anne Frank and her family are Jews living in Holland that is occupied by Germans. In the beginning, Anne seems like a typical 13 year old girl who writes her secret thoughts about boys and daily events in her diary. This soon changes when her sister is called to appear before the German authorities, likely meaning that she was being sent to a concentration camp. The Franks go into hiding in a secret section of Anne’s father’s office building with another family. Through reading this book, students get a glimpse of what life was like for these Jewish families and the struggles they went through during this horrifying time. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  World Religions:   * BUDDHISM   + Buddhism is a religion that focuses on spiritual development and gaining insight into the nature of life. It originated when Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, was enlightened and taught a path from his own experiences. The Buddhism tradition teaches that all life is interconnected so compassion is both natural and important. Central to this belief system are the beliefs in karma, the Four Noble Truths, and that nothing is fixed or permanent. There is not a belief in a personal god. * HINDUISM   + Elements of Hinduism go back thousands of years and in some ways it is considered the oldest living religion in the world. Hinduism is difficult to define since there are so many different beliefs and practices associated with it. Hinduism is based on the belief in unity of everything, called Braham. There is no individual founder of Hinduism and no set of teachings that are commonly agreed upon. It can be referred to as a way of life or family of religions instead of a single religion. * ISLAM   + Islam is said to have begun in Mecca, Arabia over 1400 years ago. The Prophet Muhammad is known for revealing the faith to humanity. The people who are followers of Islam are called Muslims. A core belief of Muslims is that there is one God, or Allah in Arabic. The holy book in which Muslims base their laws is the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The Sunnah is believed to be an example of Muhammad and the fact there are five basic Pillars of Islam. The five pillars are the declaration of faith, praying five times a day, giving money to charity, fasting, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once. * CHRISTIANITY   + Christianity is known to be the world’s most popular religion with over 2.1 billion followers throughout the world. Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, who lived in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago. It is believed that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and that he is the Son of God. Christians also believe that God sent his Son to earth to save humanity form the consequences of their sins. Any group or individual who believes in the teaching of Jesus is considered a Christian. Christians believe in only one God and that there are three elements – God the Father, God the Son, and The Holy Spirit. The holy book of Christianity is the Bible which includes the Old and New Testaments. There are over 1,500 Christian faith groups in North American which promote many differing and conflicting beliefs. * JUDAISM   + Judaism originated over 3500 years ago in the Middle East. It is one of the oldest religions that is monotheistic. People who follow Judaism, called Jews, believe that they are the chosen people by God to set an example of holiness and ethical practices for the world. Moses is said to have founded Judaism, and Jews also relate their history to Abraham. Jews believe in one God that they have a covenant with. The central religious document is the Torah and the interpretation of laws in the Torah is known as halakhah. The leaders of this faith are called Rabbis and individuals worship in synagogues. Judaism is most commonly associated with the Holocaust, when over 6 million Jewish people were killed in an attempt to make the faith disappear. |
| ***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***   1. Have students explore their own assumptions and experiences about religion, belief, or any specific tradition before discussions about religions (p. 12). 2. Explain to students that their own assumptions are important to recognize and consider because these biases and assumptions can hinder their learning and cause them to stereotype or misjudge the beliefs or practices of others (p. 12). 3. Establish a classroom climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty (p. 12).    * Encourage students to not make generalizations toward more qualified statements such as “All Christians are intolerant.”    * Examine how students’ judgments many impact others.    * Allow students to explore ideas and ask questions without fear 4. Use a religious studies approach to teaching about religion instead of a faith based exploration intended to promote a specific theological worldview (p. 4).  * Introduces students to the variety of faith-based expressions that exist within and between traditions. * The goal is to deepen understanding about religious diversity and the roles that religion plays in political, economic, and cultural life across time.  1. Use a cultural studies approach for teaching religion to build upon the historical approach, literacy approach, and traditions-based approach (p. 10).    * Emphasizes ways that religion is embedded in culture and cannot be understood in isolation from its particular social/historical expressions.    * Includes consideration of social power and ways that race, class, and gender provide important categories of analysis when investigating religious expressions and their cultural and political influences.    * Recognizes that teachers and students are interpreters of meaning and that conscious and unconscious assumptions about religion profoundly shape the ways that individuals express what they know and interpret what they learn about religion 2. Students should be told that not everyone in the class is expected to agree, and they should understand that the goal is developing awareness and understanding because accurate representations of traditions reduce misunderstandings that occur from false generalizations. The teacher should not promote or emphasize one religion over another (p. 12). 3. Introduce students to the fundamental premises of religious studies to give them a good foundation for further study with a limited amount of time and resources (p. 12). The premises include:    * Religions are internationally diverse and have internal variations.    * Religions are dynamic.    * Religions are embedded in culture | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***   * Students can complete a KWL chart prior to learning about world religions. This will give the teacher information about what students already know about religion, what misconceptions they have, and their prior experiences relating to religion. * Students can complete a written reflection to help them brainstorm what they already know about religion. * Create classroom discussion ground rules with the class so everyone feels comfortable to participate and understands the expectations of tolerance, respect, and honesty * Ensure students know that they are studying and becoming aware of different religions, not promoting, practicing, or imposing any particular religious views. * Teaching using a cultural studies approach requires training in religious studies. In order to use this best practice approach, the teacher can attend classes or workshops. The teacher could also further their religion knowledge through in depth research. * Students could complete a research project with a group that requires them to examine a particular religion and how this religion is part of the culture. Projects on each religion could then be presented to the class so each student is exposed to each religion’s culture. * Begin with an example of diversities represented in a tradition that students are familiar with and then help them apply their understanding to less familiar traditions and worldviews. * Have students compare cultures historically with the culture today. Students could then consider how the culture’s traditions and core values have evolved and/or preserved over time. * Instead of taking a field trip to one place of worship, two or more field trips should be taken so students can compare and contrast the similarities and differences. It is also a good idea to visit two communities within the same tradition to exemplify the internal differences that exist. This experiential encounter can be applied to the study of variations within other religions. * Religions can be taught through the use of music, theater, film, and the creative arts. Examples from these different genres could be examined based on their exemplification of religious beliefs and symbolism. |
| ***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?***  I would like to use the cultural studies approach when teaching religion. If I teach 6th grade social studies, I would like to attain more training or professional development on religious studies so I can be better prepared to teach using this approach. This approach builds upon the other three approaches (The Historical Approach, The Literacy Approach, and the Traditions-Based Approach) and emphasizes that religion is “embedded in culture and cannot be understood in isolation from its particular social/historical expressions” (10).  There are many benefits to the cultural studies approach that are noted in the AAR Guidelines. First of all, this approach helps students realize that religion is part of the human experience. In order to understand religion, it is necessary to understand how religious practices influence and are influenced by the culture. In addition, this approach provides tools to understand how some religious beliefs and practices became culturally or politically important as others became marginalized. This approach also emphasizes the recognition and exploration of the dimensions of knowledge claims. It is noted that this approach requires teachers to cover less content with more depth. I think this will allow students to have a more holistic understanding.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  Through the first competency (Understand the difference between the secular academic and devotional approaches to religion, and consistently use the secular academic approach), I understand that it is necessary to use the secular academic approach at all times when teaching about religion. Devotional approaches are intended to promote a particular religion and worldview. This approach encourages practitioners to adopt practices and values that are consistent with a set of beliefs. Contrarily, the secular academic approach teaches about religion through a non-devotional religious framework. Religions are compared in both form and function. The goal of this academic approach is to deepen understanding of religious diversity and understand the roles that religion plays in political, economic, and cultural life. Teachers should teach this subject in a way that explores awareness and exposure of religions, not acceptance, practice, or promoting of certain religions.  Through the second competency (Be able to address in a constructive way religious disagreements and conflicts that arise in the classroom), I understand that religion can be a controversial topic in the classroom. I will establish a respectful and tolerant classroom environment where students feel comfortable to share their ideas. I will emphasize to students that it is not necessary for everyone to agree on religious beliefs and practices and that even within a certain religious tradition, there are numerous variations. If a disagreement comes up, this would be a perfect teachable moment of how many people disagree when it comes to religion. Students would be allowed to share their views but would have to be respectful and tolerant of others’ opinions.  Through the third competency (Be aware of, and manage effectively, religious diversity in the classroom), I understand that it is important to recognize the diverse religious backgrounds of the students in my class. This allows the teacher to recognize any potentially sensitive or emotionally topics for students. The backgrounds of students can be discovered through student reflections about religion or other prior knowledge activities.  Through the fourth competency (Create an environment of respect and tolerance—a safe environment in which students feel free to talk about religion), I understand that it is critical to establish a positive classroom environment where all students feel comfortable and are eager to share their thoughts about religion. Guidelines for discussions can be agreed upon by the students and teacher so students can share ideas without having to worry about others being judgmental or hurtful. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***   * In addition to a KWL activity, I would like to use an anticipation guide before the religion lessons. The anticipation guide would have a series of basic religion related statements and students would have to check off if they agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or disagree before the lesson and after the lesson. This will allow the teacher to get an idea of how students feel about the topic of religion before learning about it. The teacher would also be able to see where potential agreements or disagreements might show up in class so they are prepared to handle these situations effectively. It would be my hope that through the class discussions and activities that all students gain awareness and tolerance toward religions other than their own. * One method I would like to use when studying religions is the strategy of Think-Pair-Share. After reading, viewing, or listening to information about aspects of religions or comparisons between different religions, I will ask students to think about the reading for a few minutes and jot down any thoughts or reflections that come to mind. Then, I will have students share their thoughts with a partner for a few minutes. After this, I will have students share their thoughts with the whole group. This strategy will allow students to share their thoughts and opinions, even if they are not comfortable sharing with the whole group. Also after sharing ideas with their partner and getting feedback, students will be more likely to share with the whole group. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  The information in this AAR document was very beneficial. I have not had the opportunity to teach Social Studies, so I had never really thought about teaching religion in the classroom before. The guidelines presented are clear and make sense. Although religion can be a controversial subject, I feel that these guidelines make the topic more accessible and teachable. The document’s guidelines stress that the approach to teaching religion in public schools should encourage awareness of religions instead of acceptance of certain religions. Religions should be studied in schools instead of practiced in schools. Also, students should be exposed to a variety of religious views but particular views should not be imposed on students. Students should be educated about all religions instead of religions being promoted. Following and adopting these guidelines should make religion less of a controversial subject. | ***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 will take all of the information I have learned through my world religions research and AAR guidelines and establish an inquiry based unit. This unit could be planned collaboratively with language arts and social studies teachers. The unit would involve preview strategies such as KWL, anticipation guides, and written reflections. An introductory video clip would be shown to engage students. Students would then be divided into cooperative learning groups. Each group would be given a specific religion to research. A web quest would be created so students could examine different aspects of their given religion using iPads or laptops. Students would be given time to explore and note specific details about the religion on a chart and come up with a way to teach the information to the class (through a PowerPoint, video, etc.). As groups present their information to the class, all students would take notes a comparative chart of all of the religions. After students have their charts filled in based on the group information, similarities and differences between the religions could be examined. How culture influences and is influenced by religion would also be explored. Additional comparative readings and videos would then be explored and discussed by students. As an assessment, students could pick two religions and do an analysis of similarities and differences between them in a written paper. Another assessment would be for students to choose an artistic media such as music, art, theatre, film, or a novel that represents a religion. Students could write an article explaining how the religion is represented in this medium using what they have learned about each religion. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |