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***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:**  PIS.1- Compare the cultural practices and products of the societies studied including: Class structure; gender roles; beliefs; customs and traditions.  People in Societies #2-Compare world religions and belief systems focusing on geographic origins, founding leaders and teachings including: Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam.  PIS.3- Explain factors that foster conflict or cooperation among countries: Language; religion; types of government; historic relationships; economic interests.  **Resources:**  Buddhism-   * PBS.org. (n.d.). Basics of Buddhism. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>.   + Offers an introduction of Buddhism as well as information on the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama. The Four Noble Truths, karma, as well as the Cycle of Rebirth are also discussed. * Barrow, Mandy. (n.d.). Buddhism. Retrieved from <http://chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/buddhism.htm>.   + This website offers information and facts in a very organized manner, grouping information in related sections. Each section is headed in bold by a question, making it very easier on the researcher to find what they are looking for. The website includes a description of Siddhartha Gautama as well as the symbols of Buddhism and the Noble Eight-Fold Path. * Lee, J.M. (1999). *I once was a monkey: Stories Buddha told.* Berryville, VA: Berryville Graphics.   + This book introduces children to the Jatakas through the use of illustrations and a fictitious retelling. The story includes animals that are stuck in a cave during a monsoon arguing until a Buddha statue comes to life and “tells them stories.” These fables are the birth stories that are believed to have been told to Buddha’s disciples.   Hinduism-   * BBC. (2012). Hinduism. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/>.   + This website has detailed information on Hinduism including it’s history, important concepts, rites and rituals, and deities, to name a few. Organized in a series of drop down menus, the origin of the religion as well as important Hindu texts are also included. * Prime, R. (2004). *Hinduism: World religion series.* North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Whitecap Books.   + This book is organized into paragraphs based on what Hinduism is, how it began, how Hindus live, how they worship, how Hinduism has changed over time, and what challenges Hindus face today. Photographs accompany much of the information in the book and also utilizes sidebars to incorporate quick, concise information. * Patheos. (2008-12). Religion library: Hinduism. Retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Hinduism.html>.   + This website offers an overview of Hinduism including quick facts such as when it was formed (2000 B.C.E.), where it originated (India), estimated amount of followers, etc. It also includes a wide array of links to the side of the web page organized in five sections: origins, history, beliefs, rituals and worship, and ethics and community. The website also offers an interview with a Hindu woman detailing what it is like being a Hindu in today’s world.   Islam-   * Barrow, M. (n.d.) Information on Islam. Retrieved from <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/islam.htm>.   + This website offers basic information about Islam such as the fact that it is the second most popular religion in the world and that those who follow Islam are called Muslims. It also includes information about a variety of concepts such as the sacred text (Qur-an) and the 6 main beliefs of Islam. * Barnard, B. (2011). *The genius of Islam: How Muslims made the modern world.*  New York, NY: Random House, Inc.   + Barnard uses very detailed and elaborate illustrations to detail the wide array of contributions to the world made by the Islam religion. The book includes a detailed map based color-coded by regions and the book includes sectioned based on the time period. * Rainbow Family. (2007). Islam for children. Retrieved from <http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/islam/geography.html>.   + This website includes graphics to support the textual information as well as provides Islamic links and terms. Some of the information included on the website also touches upon the daily life of a Muslim, Islamic art, and information on mosques.   Christianity-   * BBC. (2012). Religions: Christianity. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/>.   + This website offers a general overview of Christianity as well as more in depth information concerning the beliefs, history, and ethics surrounding Christianity. Information on the Saints, the Pope, and Christmas are also included in the drop down menus of the website. * Oracle Education Foundation. (n.d.) Christianity: Introduction. Retrieved from <http://library.thinkquest.org/28505/christianity/intro.htm>.   + This website includes brief, clear descriptions concerning the Resurrection, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the central belief of Christians. Information regarding Jerusalem, Christmas, and Easter are also included. * Tambini, M. & Wilkinson, P. (2003). *DK Eyewitness Books: Christianity.*  New York, NY: DK Publishing, Inc.   + This book goes very in-depth into the many aspects of Christianity including the past and present of Christianity, the cycle of life, the Christian calendar, and priesthood. The life and death of Jesus Christi as well as Heaven and Hell are both included in the book.   Judaism-   * Patheos. (2012). Religion library: Judaism. Retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Judaism.html>.   + This website includes a variety of links on the side of the website pertaining to different aspects of the Jewish faith. On the home page quick facts are offered including when and where the religion was initially formed, the amount of current followers worldwide, and sacred texts such as the Torah. * Barrow, M. (n.d.) World religions: Information on the Jewish religion. Retrieved from <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/jewish.htm>.   + This website offers extensive information about the Jewish religion in an organized manner. Important information is included on the homepage such as the place of origin, the founder, and major festivals. The index is organized in a series of linked questions such as: What is the symbol of Judaism? What is the most important day of the week for Jews? and What do Jews believe? * Harlin, G. & Krensky, S. (2006). *Hannukah at Valley Forge.* New York, NY: Dutton Children’s Books.   + This book has a great fictitious historical connection as it explains the story behind Hannukah. George Washington reflects on his visit with a Polish soldier during the Revolutionary War as the soldier tells him about the Jews’ fight for religious freedom against King Antiochus. * Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.   + This book offers a great historical fiction account of the Nazi invasion and Jewish evacuation in Denmark in 1943 through the eyes of Annemarie, a ten-year-old girl. Annemarie’s family takes in Ellen, Annemarie’s best friend, and her family to hide them from the Nazi soldiers and their attempt to safely smuggle them out of the country.   ALL RELIGIONS:   * Bowker, J. (1997). *DK Eyewitness books: The great faiths explored and explained.* New York, NY: DK Publishing.   + Includes each of the world religions along with a religious timeline and pictures to enhance the text. The origins of the religions are discussed as well as content that is specific to each religion. * United Religions Initiative. (2002). World Religions. Retrieved from <http://www.uri.org/kids/world.htm>.   + This website is tailored for kids and provides short, clear information on each of the religions as well as a tab for information on a variety of other religions such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Jainism. The website also offers additional resources in both book and website format as well as a glossary, teacher activities, and so forth. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  Buddhism is about 2,500 years old and was founded by Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha when he finally achieved his quest for Enlightenment. Buddhists believe that nothing is fixed or permanent and their belief system is centered on the relationship between humanity and God. Buddha taught three universal truths and four noble truths. Meditation is also an important part of this religion as Buddhists look within themselves to find enlightenment, understanding, and the truth of Buddha’s teachings.  Hinduism originated in India and has no single founder, scripture, and no commonly agreed set of teachings. Hindus believe in a universal soul/God called Brahman and believe there is a part of Brahman in everyone called the Atman. Reincarnation is also a central belief of this religion and that a person’s next reincarnation is dependent on how their previous life was lived. For many practicing Hindu’s the four main goals in human life are Moksha, Dharma, Artha, and Karma.  Islam is the second most popular religion in the world and those who practice it are called Muslims. Muslims believe in one God, Allah, and that Islam was revealed by the prophet Muhammad. Muslims have 6 main beliefs, which include the belief in Allah as the only God, angels, the holy books, the Prophets (such as Muhammad, Adam, Moses, etc.), Judgment Day, and Predestination. The holy book is referred to as the Qur’an and a mosque is the term used for the religious place of practice. Muslism are required to pray five times a day facing in the direction of the Mecca. Each time of prayer is at a specific time starting after first light and before sunrise and ending once the sun has gone down.  Christianity originated in Israel and Jesus Christ is believed to be the founder. Christians practice their religion in a church and believe that there is only one God and he created the world. The holy book is called the Bible and is divided into the Old and New Testaments. Parts of the writings in the Old Testament are also sacred to people of the Jewish and Islam religions. Christianity developed as a part of Judaism, seeing as Jesus Christ was Jewish.  Judaism is based on the belief that there is a single God who created the Earth and that all Jews can have a personal relationship with this God. The Torah is the primary document of Judaism and was given to the Jews by the Prophet Moses. Jews worship in a synagogue and are led by a Rabbi. Some of the main Jewish festivals include Passover, Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Sukkot, Hannukah, Tisha B’av, Tu B’Shevat, and Yom Hashoah. A special ceremony is also held for boys when they turn 13 and girls when they turn 12 to signify that they are now adults in the eyes of the Jewish religion. |
| ***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***  **Developing skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.**  One main point from the reading is that a school’s approach to religion should be academic, not devotional. This helps guarantee that religion is being taught in a constitutionally appropriate manner. Therefore, students are able to gain an all-encompassing education rather than an education that focuses on one religion based on the bias of the teacher. Another main point that coincides with religion being taught in a constitutionally appropriate way is that schools should aim to make students aware of religions, but not pressure them to accept the religions. As the facilitator In a classroom for an academic discussion on religions, it is important to not pressure students to feel a certain way about religions. Students must be given the education to make their own informed decisions, and the teacher must work at fostering a positive and comfortable learning environment for children to do so.  **Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.**  One example given in the text is that the school educates students on all religions without promoting or discriminating against a specific religion. Another key point given in the text is that the school sponsors study about religion and don’t practice it in school. These two points are important to keep in mind when discussing religion so as not to encroach on any students’ religious beliefs. Especially in public school, it is unconstitutional to force students to practice any type of religion, and teachers should by no means be making students do this.  **Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.**  Two key points from the reading include the fact that schools can expose students to a wide range of religious views but shouldn’t impose a particular religious view on students as well as the fact that schools should be informing students about various religious beliefs without trying to conform students. A teacher must remain neutral in order to give students’ a bias-free education in regards to religion. Students deserve the chance to learn about each of the world’s religions without receiving biased or false information from their teacher. | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***  I would first start the unit by explaining to students that we are going to be talking about ALL religions and learn about the information for each one. I would explain to students that they will not have to share their own religious beliefs, as we will be talking about a wide variety of world religions in an educational discussion. I would first have students share what they know using a KWI for what they already know about world religions, what they want to know, and what they’re interested in learning. I would help students research the key points of each religion and draw parallels among them to help them understand the similarities and differences. Peer collaboration and discussion would play a key part in this unit so students can share their findings, misconceptions, and so forth with each other to help deepen their understanding of the various religions. By fostering this type of unit students are given the chance to look at a variety of religions rather than just study one. It also allows students to take ownership over their own learning and try and correct their own misconceptions through research and begin to build on their prior knowledge. As the teacher I would facilitate discussion on each of the religions and make sure students are staying on task and focusing on the key points of all, rather than just one or two, religions. |
| ***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?***  While I would love to follow all four of the approaches, I think I will definitely make sure to incorporate the cultural studies approach. This approach uses the other three approaches (literacy, historical, and traditions-based) while taking students’ understanding to a deeper level. This allows students a more multi-dimensional view of religions instead of just focusing on the history, a specific story, etc. This approach also helps students construct their own understanding of religions and encourages them to synthesize the information in their own unique way.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  **Understand the difference between the secular academic and devotional approaches to religion, and consistently use the secular academic approach.**  The difference between these two approaches are that in a secular academic approach students are merely learning about religion and in a devotional academic approach students are practicing religion. I would be strictly using the secular academic approach as it is the only constitutionally appropriate means to discuss religion in a public school.  **Be able to address in a constructive way religious disagreements and conflicts that arise in the classroom.**  It is very important to foster a positive learning environment that encourages students to express themselves and respect others. While this is always an appropriate idea to encourage in a classroom, it is even more important during the study of religions. Students need to understand that regardless of their religion, we are going to be studying all religions in the classroom in a fair and respectful manner. We will not be debating which religion is correct or incorrect but will merely be studying the information and cultural concepts for each religion.  **Be aware of, and manage effectively, religious diversity in the classroom.**  This is where the secular academic approach over the devotional academic approach is extremely important. It is essential students understand that they are learning about the religions from a purely academic viewpoint, and their own practices and beliefs are not necessary to complete the unit. At no point in the unit would students need to or be encouraged to share their own beliefs in the classroom.  **Create an environment of respect and tolerance – a safe environment in which students feel free to talk about religion.**  I would encourage students to share their opinions without ever forcing a student. I would also make clear to students that just as we all have our own likes, dislikes, and beliefs, it is important that we respect each other’s opinions and comments during the unit. As a person, we need to be respectful of what others have to say. While we don’t have to agree with their ideas or beliefs, we do need to respect them. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  I would utilize a cultural studies approach for the secular academic education of students. Students would be made aware before beginning the topic that we are not practicing religion, only learning about each religion in order to better understand those around us and others all over the world. Before beginning I would stress the importance of being respectful of others and the fact that this unit will be the same for everyone regardless of their religious beliefs. I would also explain to students that they would by no means be asked to reveal their own religious beliefs. In fostering a positive classroom environment, I think that the cultural studies approach would be the most conducive as it recognizes that all individuals interpret their own understandings. Students would be encouraged to explore their own misconceptions and shape a new understanding based on the information being researched and explored. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  They had a huge impact on my confidence in approaching these topics. Prior to reading these guidelines, I felt very uncomfortable discussing religion with students for two reasons, one of which being that I simply didn’t know enough. The other is that I was unsure as to how appropriate it was for me to answer students’ questions about religion in a public school setting. This document helped reinforce the idea that religions must be taught in school to foster religious literacy, however it’s imperative that it’s done from a purely academic viewpoint. It also helped me realize that in order to teach about religion in the way that I want to and feel comfortable doing so I must first complete my own extensive research and studying to make myself more knowledgeable on the topics being discussed. | ***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.***  Before even introducing the unit to students I would first make myself much more knowledgeable on the world religions I plan on introducing into my classroom. To do this, I could go back and look at the resources I found for this scavenger hunt as well as the resources provided by my classmates on the discussion board. This is a great way to provide me with resources not only for myself but also for students as I start to introduce the topic of world religions into a classroom. I would then introduce the unit and explain my expectations for students in regards to respecting each other and fostering a positive classroom-learning environment. This is important to discuss with students before beginning so that all students have a common understanding of the fact that supporting and respecting each others’ ideas and opinions is of the utmost importance. Students would then be encouraged to research each of the world religions and see how religion plays a huge role in the culture of a region. Students could complete their own research projects based on their own unique curiosities and collaborate with others to further their understanding of the ideas mentioned. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |