***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***  **Below is the statement from the OACS that best fits this content:**  **Grade:** Sixth  **Strand:** Geography  **Topic:** Human Systems  **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).  **Below are statements that could also be connected to the above content statement and this content since #2 mentions religion (in connection with ancient civilizations), #5 discusses cultural criteria (which includes belief systems), #7 mentions social factors as a reason for movement (including religious freedom), and in #10, religion can sometimes determine government.**  **The themes for all of these statements (including #8 above) are: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere.**  **Strand:** History **Topic:** Early Civilizations: The eight features of civilizations include cities, well-organized central governments, complex religions, job specialization, social classes, arts and architecture, public works and writing. Early peoples developed unique civilizations. Several civilizations established empires with legacies influencing later peoples. **Content Statement:** 2. Early civilizations (India, Egypt, China and Mesopotamia) with unique governments, economic systems, social structures, religions, technologies and agricultural practices and products flourished as a result of favorable geographic characteristics. The cultural practices and products of these early civilizations can be used to help understand the Eastern Hemisphere today.  **Strand:** Geography **Topic:** Places and Regions: A place is a location having distinctive characteristics, which give it meaning and character and distinguish it from other locations. A region is an area with one or more common characteristics, which give it a measure of homogeneity and make it different from surrounding areas. Regions and places are human constructs. **Content Statement:** 5. Regions can be determined, classified and compared using various criteria (e.g., landform, climate, population, cultural, economic).  **Strand:** Geography **Topic:** Human Systems: Human systems represent the settlement and structures created by people on Earth’s surface. The growth, distribution and movements of people are driving forces behind human and physical events. Geographers study patterns in cultures and the changes that result from human processes, migrations and the diffusion of new cultural traits. **Content Statement:** 7. Political, environmental, social and economic factors cause people, products and ideas to move from place to place in the Eastern Hemisphere in the past and today.  **Strand:** Government **Topic:** Roles and Systems of Government: The purpose of government in the United States is to establish order, protect the rights of individuals and promote the common good. Governments may be organized in different ways and have limited or unlimited powers. **Content Statement:** 10. Governments can be categorized as monarchies, theocracies, dictatorships or democracies, but categories may overlap and labels may not accurately represent how governments function. The extent of citizens␣ liberties and responsibilities varies according to limits on governmental authority.  ***Resources for Buddhism:***  ***1. Website-*** PBS. (n.d.). Buddhism: An introduction. *Thailand: Jewel of the Orient*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>  *This website provides information about the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, as well as information about the Four Noble Truths, karma, and rebirth.*  ***2. Website-*** BBC. (2002). Zen Buddhism. *Religions*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisions/zen_1.shtml>  *This website provides a general overview of the faith of Buddhism, especially focusing on the history of Zen Buddhism and the meaning of practicing Zen. Zen Buddhism encourages people to look within themselves when searching for Enlightenment.*  ***3. Content book-***  Thompson, M. (2010). *Buddhism*. North Vancouver, BC (Canada): Whitecap Books Ltd.  *This book, which is part of a series on religion, provides facts about Buddhism and answers the question: What is enlightenment?*  ***4. Adolescent literature-*** Muth, J. J. (2008). *Zen shorts*. New York, NY: Scholastic.  *This book has a selection of short stories that each share Zen principles (as in Zen Buddhism) through a panda bear and his polite interactions with children experiencing typical life events, like sharing. In one story, a child visits a pool but wastes much of the day being mad at his brother, showing that sometimes people have to let go of things that cannot be changed.*  ***Resources for Hinduism:***  ***1. Website-*** BBC. (2012). Hinduism. *Religion*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/>  *This website provides an overview of Hinduism, including concepts, deities (Brahma, Shiva, Lakshmi, and Vishnu), ethics, history, and holy days. Hinduism began in the Indus Valley. Hindus believe in a Supreme God with forms represented by multiple deities. Hindus believe in birth, death, and rebirth, a cycle governed by Karma.*  ***2. Adolescent literature-*** Arni, Samhita. (2011). *Sita’s Ramayana* (M. Chitrakar, Illustrator). Berkeley, CA: Groundwood Books.  *The Ramayana is a famous poem written in Sanskrit after 300 BC by Hindu sage Valmiki. This story shares Hindu teachings and is from the perspective of the queen, Sita. Themes of the book encourage loyalty, trust, and compassion.*  ***3. Content book-*** Heiligman, D. (2008). *Holidays around the world: Celebrate Diwali: With sweets, lights, and fireworks*. Des Moines, IA: National Geographic.  *This book provides photographic examples and facts about Diwali. Facts are provided about the Hindu religion, and though the focus of the book is on India, celebration of this holiday in four other countries is also documented in this book.*  ***Resources for Islam:***  ***1. Website-*** PBS. (n.d.). Islam: Empire of faith. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/faithgod.html>  *This website provides an overview of the faith of Islam, including information about the Five Pillars of Islam and facts about the Koran. The information is linked to a film with additional educational resources. According to this site, there are two important texts in Islam, the Koran and the Traditions, which teaches about Mohammad’s life and teaching.*  ***2. Content book-*** Hoyt-Goldsmith, D. (2002). *Celebrating Ramadan* (L. Migdale, Photographer). New York, NY: Holiday House.  *In this book with accompanying photographs, readers are introduced to the Islamic faith and given an introduction to the holiday of Ramadan. The book focuses on Ibraheem who lives in New Jersey and practices Islam. The Islamic lunar calendar is included in this text.*  ***3. Adolescent literature-*** Khan, R. (2002). *Muslim child: Understanding Islam through stories and poems* (P. Gallinger, Illustrator). Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.  *This book provides short pieces of literature that help the reader understand what it is like to be a child (including in the U.S., Canada, Pakistan, and other countries) and practicing the faith of Islam. Sidebars accompany each story to provide specific facts about Islam. In one story, a boy ponders a situation where his friends encounter his mother in her full-body dress.*  ***Resources for Christianity:***  ***1. Website-*** BBC. (2012). Christianity. *Religions*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/> *This site provides information about the Christian religion, including information about beliefs, Christmas, ethics, history, holy days, rites and rituals, and more. This site explains that important holidays are Easter (which focuses on Jesus rising from the dead) and Christmas (focusing on the birth of Jesus).*  ***2. Website-*** Dishman, B. (2012). What are the different Christian religions? *eHow.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.ehow.com/about_5138714_different-christian-religions.html>  *This site provides basic facts about the Christian religion and also describes the various denominations of Christianity. Catholicism eventually gave way to multiple sects. Christianity is practiced by approximately 2 billion people.*  ***3. Adolescent literature-*** Kramlich, C. (1998). *Treasure Box*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.  *In this text, Mary, the mother of Jesus, shares artifacts from her treasure box that relate to Jesus and the Christian faith, including gold, frankincense, and myrrh. There is more myrrh in Mary’s box because it was going to be used to anoint Jesus’ body but he had risen from the dead.*  ***4.Content book-*** Wilkinson, P., & Tambini, M. (2006). *DK eyewitness books: Christianity*. New York, NY: DK Children.  *This book provides facts about the Christian faith and related photographs of artifacts from the Christian faith in the present and throughout history. Topics covered include Catholicism, Protestantism, ways of worship in Christianity, and more.*  ***Resources for Judaism:***  ***1. Website-*** Rich, T. (2011). What is Judaism*? Judaism 101*. Retrieved from <http://www.jewfaq.org/judaism.htm>  *This site provides an in-depth look at the religion of Judaism, artifacts common in this faith, as well as a “times” section that provides information about the Jewish calendar and holidays. The main holy text in Judaism is the Torah.*  ***2. Website-*** BBC. (2012). Judaism- An introduction. *Schools- Religion*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/judaism/>  *This site provides an overview of world religions and includes a page devoted to Judaism that provides information on the history, beliefs, and books of Judaism.*  ***3. Adolescent Literature-*** Zee, R. V., & Sneider, M. (2007). *Eli Remembers* (B. Farnsworth, Illustrator). Grand Raids, MI: Eerdman’s Books.  *In this book, a young boy, Eli, visits Eastern Europe to learn about the Holocaust and why his family is sometimes sad while lighting candles during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.*  ***4. Adolescent literature-*** Gerstein, M. (2006). *The white ram: A story of Abraham and Isaac*. New York, NY: Holiday House.  *This story is based on Midrash (Jewish tales of Old Testament Stories) of how a ram instead took Isaac’s place as a sacrifice by Abraham. The final page shows how the ram’s remains built a temple and the horns would be “used to call the people of Israel home.”*  **General Books Regarding Multiple Religions:**  **1. Content book-** Osborne, M. P. (1996). *One world, many religions: The ways we worship*. New York, NY: Knopf Books.  *This book provides facts about seven major world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism). Related photographs are also provided for further understanding of each faith.*  **2. Content book-** Buller, L. (2005). *A faith like mine*. New York, NY: DK Children.  *This book provides information about major world religions by sharing perspectives from children who practice each religion. Sidebars provide additional facts, for instance, religious symbols, beliefs, and ceremonies present in each faith.*  **3. Content book-** Langley, M. (2012). *DK eyewitness books: Religion*. New York, NY: DK Children.  *This book devotes 1-2 pages for many of the religions practiced throughout the world. Facts are provided for each and many photographs of related artifacts and practices are also provided.* | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  See below- each is listed beside a related annotated bibliography.  \*\*\*Please note that general information is provided on each religion. Readers of this information should be reminded that not every person who practices a particular religion may hold these exact beliefs. Differences in religion exist among various people, even those who practice the same religion or denomination.  ***Buddhism:***  *The founder of Buddhism was a prince who gave up his title and possessions to become a monk. He believed that “suffering lay at the end of all existence” (PBS, n.d.). He became known as Buddha, or “Enlightened One”, and traveled throughout India sharing his teachings. The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism provide a way of understanding and dealing with suffering. The First Truth says that suffering exists, the Second attempts to find a cause of suffering, the Third discusses Nirvana, which provides freedom from suffering, and the Fourth provides the steps for the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhists believe in karma, meaning that good deeds lead to good results whereas bad actions cause one bad consequences (some actions are neutral, like breathing). In Buddhism, there are six realms in which one can be reborn, three fortunate and three unfortunate. A form of Buddhism is Zen Buddhism, brought from India to China in the 6th century. According to the BBC, “Zen Buddhism is a mixture of Indian Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism” (2002). This faith encourages people to look inside themselves for enlightenment and attempts to “understand the meaning of life” (BBC, 2002).*  ***Hinduism:***  *Over 900 million people practice Hinduism worldwide. Many philosophies and writings have influenced Hinduism and because of this, Hinduism is sometimes referred to as: “a family of religions” (BBC, 2012). The history of Hinduism is thousands of years old and began around the Indus Valley. Hinduism is a faith that believes in a Supreme God with forms represented by multiple deities that “emanate from him” (BBC, 2012). According to the BBC, “Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, governed by Karma” (2012). Vedas are the primary texts of this religion. One of the most famous celebrations of holy days in this religion is Diwali. Important concepts in Hinduism include: Atman, Dharma, Varna, Karma and Samsara, Purushartha, Brahman and God, and Guru. As an example of one of these concepts, “Darma is the power that maintains society” (BBC, 2012). Many people who practice Hinduism have a shrine in their homes and also worship at temples. Worship is often individual and involves “images (murtis), prayers (mantras), and diagrams of the universe (yantras)” (BBC, 2012).*    ***Islam:***  *PBS explains that, “[f]or Muslims, God is unique and without equal. They attempt to think about God without either making Him into a thing or a projection of the human self” (n.d.). The Koran uses shifting pronouns so that believers do not create a physical image of God. In Arabic, the term for God is Allah. The Five Pillars of Islam are the rules people who practice this religion follow. The first is belief, which means that one believes in God and testifies that, “There is no god but God and that Muhammad is His messenger” (PBS, n.d.). The second Pillar is that followers worship God five times each day. The third Pillar is fasting during Ramadan. The month of Ramadan ends with a feast. The fourth Pillar is in almsgiving, or the importance of giving to the poor, and the fifth Pillar of Islam is the importance of pilgrimage to Mecca. The Koran includes “God’s revelations to Muhammad” and the hadith are the Traditions, “the reports about Muhammad’s life and deeds” (PBS, n.d.). Those who practice Islam believe the Koran can only be understood in Arabic, which makes this language very important. Approximately 1.2 billion Muslims practice Islam today.*  ***Christianity:***  *According to Dishman (2012), “Christianity is the world’s largest religion and is made up of many different sects of denominations. While these sects have very different modes of worship and governing bodies, they all share the common belief that Jesus of Nazareth as presented in the New Testament books of the Holy Bible was God’s son and came to redeem man of his sins.” There are approximately 2 billion people in the world who practice Christianity. For the first 1,000 years, this religion was practiced through the Catholic Church. Today, many denominations exist. For those who practice Roman Catholicism, the Pope is the leader of the church. Other sects of Christianity include Orthodox Christianity (Eastern and Oriental), Protestant Christianity (including many denominations, like Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Quakers, and more), and other branches that do not always consider themselves Protestants (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others). Christians believe there is one God made up of three elements, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. An important part of the Christian religion is that Christians believe Jesus gave his life on the Cross and rose from the dead on the third day. Important holidays celebrated in the Christian faith are Easter (the Resurrection) and Christmas (the birth of Christ). The Bible (which includes the Old and New Testaments) is the holy book of Christians (BBC, 2012).*  ***Judaism:***  *In the religion of Judaism, Rambam’s principles of faith seek to describe the beliefs of Judaism. These include that: “God exists, God is one and unique…Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other, the words of the prophets are true...there will be no other Torah…[and] the Messiah will come” (Rich, 2011). Moses was the primary founder of this religion. According to the BBC, “Jews believe they have a special agreement or covenant with God. In exchange for all the good that God has done for them, Jewish people keep God’s laws and try to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives” (2012). The Torah is the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Jews worship in synagogues and are led by religious leaders known as rabbis. In Jewish tradition, the Sabbath (Shabbat) is the most important day of the week because it was on the seventh day that God rested after creation. Because of this, people who practice Judaism spend time with family and worship at synagogue. Shabbat takes place from Friday evening to sunset on Saturday. Jewish festivals include Pesach (Passover), Rosh Hashanah (the New Year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and Hanukkah (the Festival of Lights). For children, a boy celebrates Bar Mitzvah at 13 and a girl Bat Mitzvah at 12. At these celebrations, a person promises to keep the Commandments. Approximately 13 million people practice Judaism around the world.* |
| ***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***  The paragraphs below justify competencies in terms of the AAR document. The 2010 version of this document was utilized for each in-text citation.  For the first competency, students should be led in discussion about their religious beliefs and the beliefs of others. According to the AAR, “there exists a widespread illiteracy about religion in the U.S. [and]…there are several consequences that stem from this illiteracy, including the ways that it fuels prejudice and antagonism, thereby hindering efforts at promoting respect for diversity” (p. 4). By encouraging students to engage in discussion about religious beliefs, religious illiteracy can be transformed into literacy, and students will have a greater respect for diversity because they will be more aware of this diversity. Additionally, “when the subject is religion, students can feel that their own personal experiences give them special knowledge and authority…one of the first challenges for teachers and students alike is to examine what assumptions they harbor about religion” (AAR, p. 11). The teacher must be able to lead discussions on religion because talking about religion will allow students to feel confident, as well as discover assumptions (correct or incorrect) that they hold about religion, like a pre-assessment. By being involved in discussion of religion, both the students and teacher will be able to form new understandings because learning about religion is also about learning about diversity and each other, our classmates and colleagues.  For the second competency, the teacher must be aware of best practices in teaching about religion. What students learn is directly tied to the teacher’s knowledge of the content and how the teacher shares this content with students. By using best practices, the teacher can ensure that students gain accurate, unbiased knowledge that they can use to better understand the world and situations they will encounter in it. The AAR explains that there are four ways to approach teaching religion in the classroom, including the historical, literary, traditions-based, and cultural studies approaches (p. 9). While all of these approaches are acceptable in different scenarios, there are certain practices to keep in mind upon choosing one of these. According to the AAR, “[o]ne general classroom strategy is to begin with an example of the diversities represented in a tradition that students are familiar with, such as Christianity, and then help them apply that understanding to other less familiar traditions and worldviews” (p. 13). This allows students to understand that even within one religion, people hold different beliefs and traditions that can change over time. Additionally, “[s]eeing examples of the way that religious beliefs, practices, and imagery change over time and place helps students recognize that, from a religious studies perspective, there is no such thing as ‘a single meaning’ of a given tradition, practice, or belief system” (AAR, p. 13). By helping students understand the many variations of religion practiced around the world (even for the same religion), the teacher can ensure that students gain the ability to notice change over time and that students lose misconceptions: just because two people practice the same religion, this does not mean they practice it the same way.  The final competency is that teachers must present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way. To do this, the teacher will need to follow the guidelines of James V. Panoch, which advise that, “[t]he school’s approach to religion is *academic* not *devotional*” (p. 7). By approaching each religion students learn about in an academic way, the teacher can ensure that one particular religion is not emphasized over another. This will help ensure students are learning about religion in a fair and neutral way. In addition, “[w]hile teachers will always be constrained by the concerns of coverage, time, and materials, introducing students to the…fundamental premises of religious studies will help challenge common misunderstandings and give students a good foundation for further study” (AAR, p. 12). This is important for the teacher to understand. There will always be time constraints, so the teacher must find a way to present the major religions (and others) in a way that is equitable and fair. The teacher must help students learn about religion and learn that “religions are internally diverse,…dynamic,…[and] embedded in culture” (p. 12). Students will be unable to learn these concepts if only one religion is taught. By studying and analyzing multiple religions in a fair and neutral way, students will understand the dynamics that are associated with religion. | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***  For the first competency, I would employ two teaching strategies in my lessons. First, I would have students reflect on their own assumptions about religion through writing and reflecting in journal entries. I cannot expect students to discuss their religion beliefs if students do not first have an opportunity to reflect on their personal beliefs. For the second strategy, to have students discuss the religious beliefs of others, I would ask students to highlight 1-2 sentences in their journals that they would like to share with the class. This would help begin a discussion. Once students have had a chance to analyze their personal beliefs and assumptions, we could begin studying different religions. In order to discuss the beliefs and practices of various religions, I would ask students to create Venn diagrams in which they could find differences and similarities between religions or even within the same religion in the current time or compared to how the religion was practiced in the past. This would provide rich content for students to discuss and would help them realize that religion is dynamic and can change over time, place, or even between people.  For the second competency, I would want to employ the best practice of helping students discover differences within the same religion and among several religions. To do so, I would show students several video clips of people practicing the same religion and different religions in multiple ways. Afterward, we would create a class concept web on the board to arrange our new understandings. By viewing multiple ways people practice religion even within the same religion, students will begin to appreciate diversity even more and our concept web can help demonstrate their new understandings and appreciation of diversity.  To also help students understand how religion changes, especially over time, I would ask students to take on the role of people within the same religion over multiple time periods. For instance, students might study Christianity by taking on the role of Puritans during the Revolution and Quakers during the Civil War. This could help students see differences within the same religion and also see how culture influences religion and religion influences culture. For instance, because of the beliefs held by Quakers, many were willing to help enslaved people escape through the Underground Railroad. Because of this, the culture also changed as more people began to believe slavery was wrong. Students could present their understandings through skits and performances. We could then discuss the content as well.  For the third competency, presenting religion in a fair and neutral way, I would devote the same amount of time to each religion researched. One way to do this would be for groups of students to each choose a religion to research and present on. Each group could present basic facts about their group’s researched religion. In this way, it would show students that each religion is important. I would also allow students to conduct further research to discover religions beyond the major religions of the world. This will also help students realize that there are multiple ideas about religion even beyond Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. This project could also help meet common core writing standards 7-9 which ask students to “research to build and present knowledge” for literacy in social studies. |
| ***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 will follow the cultural studies approach in the social studies classroom because it “build[s] upon and enhance[s] the other three approaches in its emphasis on recognizing the ways that religion is embedded in culture and cannot be understood from its particular social/historical expressions” (AAR, p. 10). I like this approach because it includes and improves upon the other three approaches. It still encourages studying the changes and differences of a religion throughout time (historical approach), looking at religion through important related pieces of literature (literary approach), and looking at common themes among different religions (traditions-based approach). In addition to these important ways of teaching about religion, the cultural studies approach also allows the students and teacher to look at the ways culture and religion are intertwined. For example, even in studying Mesopotamia, it is impossible to understand the ancient civilization without also looking at the ways religion influenced the everyday lives of these ancient people and the way their world influenced their religion. One of the reasons I like this approach is because it allows students to create deep understandings like this. They are still learning about religion, but they are also able to look at religion with a cultural view that students can relate to. They enjoy looking at differences and similarities among cultures and religions, and the cultural studies approach encourages higher order thinking that must occur when one is looking at religion through multiple lenses. Another reason I like this approach is because of the higher order thinking that is required. I want students to move beyond memorizing facts about religion and actually see how religion and culture impact one another.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  The competencies encourage that teachers will consistently use the secular approach, be able to resolve religious disagreements that arise in this study, take religious diversity in the classroom into consideration, and create a tolerant, respectful environment that students are comfortable discussing and learning about religion in. To me, this first means that I will ensure: “[t]he school strives for student *awareness* of religions, but does not press for student *acceptance* of any religion” (AAR, p. 7). By approaching this study in an academic (not devotional) way, I am ensuring student study is secular. Second, this also means that I must create an atmosphere where students have analyzed their assumptions and are willing to learn about diversity. According to the AAR, “[g]iven that the main sources of information about religion come from training in or about one’s own religious tradition (or none) and the media, it should come as no surprise that these and other forms of religious illiteracy are prevalent” (p. 5). By being aware of religious illiteracy, I can be prepared to resolve conflicts that may arise in this study and also prevent conflict by helping students learn about religious diversity. This learning about religious diversity also meets the third competency in this section. After all, if I am aware of student assumptions and personal beliefs about religion (through reading and talking with students about their initial written reflections in this unit), I will be more aware of the religious diversity in my own classroom and how this could impact our learning in positive ways (and possibly negative ways in the case of some conflicts). It should be noted that conflicts can also sometimes bring about positive effects since learning from these conflicts can bring about new understandings. Finally, for the fourth competency, I understand that in order for students to be able to learn and talk about religion, I must create a safe and respectful classroom. I have been a student in classrooms where I felt unsafe and insecure about sharing my ideas. This is not conducive to a unit on religion. By discussing beginning assumptions, “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” (p. 12). This will create a classroom of tolerance and respect because the unit will begin with an understanding that stereotyping creates a culture that prevents cooperation. Students will be more understanding and engaged in learning new ideas. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  To implement my approach, one project-based idea would be for students to keep a “journal of the world” during this unit. In the journal, students would record a list of current events. Then, students would analyze the different ways religion influences these events and how these events influence religion. Students could also complete this assignment with a historical lens and take on the role of a person in history, like someone who knew Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, and also look for connections between religion and culture. Students could present these findings by writing a paper, creating a poster, video, or PowerPoint presentation. This project would require students to argue the connections they discover, helping to also meet common core writing standard 1, which says that students will: Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.  For the first competency and to also implement the cultural studies approach, I would implement an academic approach to religion by only using resources that teach about religion instead of enforcing a particular religion onto students. For instance, to teach about each major religion, I would provide audio of songs common in each religion rather than asking students to participate in the type of worship typically used by a particular religion. To understand how culture and religion are intertwined, students could then find connections between the songs and aspects of culture. For instance, some religions now use contemporary music that sounds like the music found in pop culture. Students might also find connections between songs and history, because many songs relate to what was happening in history when the songs were written or widely used. For instance, many songs represent our world’s agrarian past when communities were often based around agriculture.  For creating a safe and tolerant classroom, I would ask students to complete an anticipation guide in addition to reflecting on their personal beliefs and assumptions in writing. The anticipation guide would provide basic facts about religion that students would mark true or false. After students complete the guide, I would reveal the answers. In this way, students would be able to identify some of their misconceptions about various religions. This would help to create a classroom of respect because students would find that stereotypes often do not hold true and that there is much we have to learn about the diversity of our world. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  Overall, I would say the AAR document greatly impacted my professional development. Prior to reading the AAR document, I have always been very nervous when any discussion of religion arises in the classroom. Even when I teach Elie Wiesel’s Holocaust memoir *Night*, I have a tendency to want to avoid discussing religion though it’s an important theme in the book. This fear arises from my lack of knowledge about different religions and my fear that students will think I am encouraging a particular belief. Now, I understand that teaching about religion is important because otherwise, students will likely remain religiously illiterate. In addition, there is a big difference between teaching religion from an academic viewpoint (the correct, secular way) and a devotional viewpoint (the method that should not be used in public schools). I now also “recognize the value of increasing literacy about religion and believe that public schools are the appropriate venue for this type of learning to occur” (AAR, p. 8). My pedagogy has also changed after reading this document. Until now, I have only used the literacy approach to teaching about religion because I was afraid to discuss religion beyond its context in a piece of literature. Now, however, I believe this approach is too limiting and will use the cultural studies approach instead. This is because this approach builds upon and enhances the literary, historical, and traditions-based approaches while taking into consideration the interaction between culture and religion. This approach has encouraged me to improve my knowledge of different religions and to incorporate higher order thinking into my implementation of religion into the curriculum so that students must analyze religion in multiple ways and through multiple perspectives. | ***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.***  To begin a unit about religion, I would first ask students to analyze their personal beliefs and assumptions through written reflections in journal-form. I would also ask students to complete an anticipation guide so that students can discover misconceptions they may hold about the content they will be studying and so that they can realize stereotyping is wrong and a consistently ineffective way for understanding the world. This will create a more tolerant and respectful classroom. To help students learn about various religions, I will incorporate various resources, including content books, adolescent literature, websites, videos (especially documentaries), literature, music, and even newspapers to help students find connections between religion and culture. I will also ask students to research a variety of religions and present their knowledge. In addition, I would ask students to look for specific connections between culture and religion (using the cultural studies approach) and ask students to keep a log of current events and then find ways in which religion influences and is influenced by these events. As explained in a previous section, this project could also be completed from a historical perspective, perhaps looking at the relationship between Quakers and the Underground Railroad.  As one specific example of practice, I would like to implement the artifact box project with students and this content. For each religion, groups of students would create an artifact box that contains artifacts that could help others understand the beliefs, traditions, and history of that religion. Students would place artifacts in the box that would also show how religion changes over time, space, and between people and how religion and culture interact. As another specific example of practice, I would ask students to create a brochure that identifies why religion is important to study. This would allow students to incorporate their knowledge from the unit, allow them to appreciate religious diversity, and allow them to use higher order thinking skills in presenting this argument (which could help meet a common core literacy in social studies with writing an: argument focused on *discipline-specific content*). I would likely end a unit on religion with students presenting their project-based learning of their new knowledge, perhaps even inviting another class of students in to share in their learning and/or inviting parents and administrators as well. After presenting, we would engage in discussion and final reflections over the content. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |