***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. | See pages 4-6 below | See pages 7-9 below |
| ***Station 2 (15 points)***   1. Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others. 2. Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion. 3. 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***  1a. An essential first step for religious studies discussions is to have students “examine what assumptions they harbor about religion.”  1b. Foster a respectful atmosphere by asking students to “move away from making generalizations to more qualified statements.”  2a. The cultural studies approach to religious studies is recommended as the best approach. This approach involves an examination of how religion is embedded in culture and has influenced history.  2b. The cultural studies approach can be challenging because teachers must be trained in religious studies and they must cover less content in more depth.  3a.Teachers oftentimes feel they are most knowledgeable about their own religion. This can cause them to limit the religions studied or can keep students from understanding that religions are internally diverse (beliefs within one religion can vary from person to person)  3b. When controversy about religion comes up in class, the teacher should redirect the discussion by reminding students that they diversity of religion is one of its major premises rather than try to identify “wrong” vs. “right.” | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***   1. It would be beneficial for students to create their own concept maps outlining what they already know of believe about a religion before beginning a unit of study about it. I do think that these should be independent so students are less likely to be afraid of offending one another or feel offended by another student who holds a certain belief. At the end of the unit, students can return to their concept map and identify misconceptions they had and write about them. 2. I think the most effective way for me to utilize best practice in religious studies is to make sure that I am informed about the religions I am teaching. I need to make sure I am more informed than what I will expect my students to be, as discussions will require me to feel confident about the material. 3. I think I will need to remind myself to always direct discussion back to the three main premises of religious studies outlined by the American Academy of Religion: religions are internally diverse, religions are dynamic, and religions are embedded in culture. Students need to be reminded that these are the reasons we are studying religion- not to determine which religion is best or right. |
| ***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 think I will follow the cultural studies approach. The article states that this approach is most recommended by those trained in religious studies. Embedded in this approach are the other three approaches, since it includes historical perspectives, literature, and traditions. However, I think it brings these three approaches together so that students can understand how rooted religion is within culture. I liked the example the AAR text provided that many important historical events can be looked at through the religious lens of the time period- not just historical events that are obviously religious in nature.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  I think perhaps the most important competency of these to keep in mind is to keep in mind that in public education, an academic approach is appropriate when teaching religion as opposed to a devotional approach. My role as a teacher is to educate students, not to recruit them. By consistently keeping this in mind when planning and carrying out religious studies lessons and discussions, I think students will feel more respected and willing to share about their own religious beliefs. Not only should I know and understand the reason behind religious studies, but my students should too! | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  The main way I will implement my understandings into practice is by taking extra steps to develop an atmosphere of tolerance in my classroom from day one. When more time is spent doing this up front with all aspects of what makes students unique, it becomes less of an issue when religious topics are discussed. If I do not set up this atmosphere in general from day one, it would be hard to “create” for a religious studies unit. This year, I plan on starting the year by having each student bring in a photograph or drawing representing something that makes them unique and posting them on a bulletin board along with a paragraph they have written to explain it. Students can add or rotate their representations throughout the year as they wish.  I usually have students fill out a self-inventory at the start of the year to tell me about their favorite hobbies, preference of reading genre, how they learn best, etc. This year I think I will include a portion where they can choose to tell me about traditions they celebrate at home. This will give me some insight into their religious beliefs. I can use this knowledge later in the year as I develop lesson plans involving religion or want to find community speakers (parents) to come in and talk about their traditions. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  I think the greatest impact this document had on me was to give me the “green light” on teaching religious studies. This is a scary topic to broach as a public school teacher because of the sensitivities behind it. There has been a lot of controversy in my school district regarding the “separation of church and state.” It is reassuring to know that this document exists and I could possibly refer it to parents and administration if I ever needed to support religious studies within my curricular plans. | ***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 noticed in my research of the five religions covered in the 6th grade OACS (Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam) that some have roots in the 4 river civilizations also included in the OACS (Mesopotamia, Indus Valley, Nile River, and Huang He). I think it would be a good idea to have students make connections between these two units of study. Within the study of river civilizations, religion should be one aspect of the research students do. It would be interesting for students to map the river civilizations as well as the spread of the five religious groups and see if there are conclusions that can be drawn about the movement of people in relation to the movement of cultural ideas (religion). |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |

**Station 1**

**Explore/Research/Reflect**

OACS 6th grade 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).*

Annotated Bibliography: Buddhism

* <http://www.pbs.org/thebuddha/birth-and-youth/>

*This is a link to a PBS website dedicated to a two hour film by David Grubin titled Buddha. The link contains the start to video segments in the following categories: Birth & Youth, Seeking, Enlightenment, Teachings, Community, Meditation, Compassion, Miracles, and Death & Legacy. Note that each category contains multiple parts. Although having a class watch the entire video series would be too lengthy, this is a fantastic resource for teachers to view in its entirety and then select segments appropriate for classroom lessons. Individual segments range from 4 to 10 minutes. The website also contains a plethora of information and teaching resources including and interactive map and timeline.*

* <http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/teacherResources/ArtofBuddhism1.pdf> and <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED471478.pdf>

*Both of these links are to the same document, however the first link is a cleaner color copy without lesson plans, and the second is black and white yet contains the full text including the suggested lesson plans and further resources. The document is found on the Smithsonian Institution’s website and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), respectively. It begins with an overview of Buddhism helpful to teachers wanting to learn more about Buddhism before introducing it to classroom lessons. It also includes many examples of Buddhist artwork and stories alongside informational explanations as to how they are pertinent to the religion and its history. The lesson plans provided on the ERIC copy cover Buddhism in India, China, and Japan and are written for elementary, middle, and high school levels.*

* Loundon, Sumi. *Blue jean Buddha: voices of young Buddhists*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001. Print.

*This is a book of first person Buddhist narratives. The perspectives range from teen Buddhists to those in their thirties. Since all of the accounts are Buddhist, yet different, this would be a good resource to draw from to reinforce the religious studies premise that religious beliefs and practices are internally diverse. It would be the teacher’s discretion to choose the narratives from the book most appropriate for the classroom and relevant to the age group.*

Annotated Bibliography: Hinduism

* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/>

*This website sponsored by the BBC describes the Hindu religion in detail. It includes links in the following categories: Hinduism at a Glance, Concepts, Dieties, Ethics, History, Holy Days, Rites & Rituals, Texts, and Worship. Each section is easy to navigate and provides information at an adult reading level. However, portions of the text could be used in the intermediate classroom for research purposes.*

* <http://www.pbs.org/thestoryofindia/gallery/photos/14.html#hinduism>

*This website would prove very useful in the classroom for study of Hinduism or India in general. The site provides a series of pictures, each of which deals with a different aspect of India. This specific webpage deals with religion. There are places on each picture where students can click for more information. This is an extremely interactive, informative, and visual site.*

* <http://www.asia.si.edu/pujaonline/puja/background.html>

*This website provides a simple, straightforward, and less overwhelming introduction to Hinduism. It is meant to provide background knowledge for teachers. The information is presented in a question-answer format.*

* Johari, Harish. *The birth of the Ganga*. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions India, 1998. Print.

*This is a picture book telling a mythological Hindu story about the creation of the river Ganga. Although a story, it could serve as an appropriate introduction to some of the guiding principles, aspects, and history of Hinduism.*

Annotated Bibliography: Islam

* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/>

*This website sponsored by the BBC describes the Islamic religion in detail. It includes links in the following categories: Islam at a Glance, Arts & Culture, Beliefs, History, Holy Days, Ethics, Practices, Prayer & Worship, Rites & Rituals, Subdivisions, and Texts. Each section is easy to navigate and provides information at an adult reading level. However, portions of the text could be used in the intermediate classroom for research purposes.*

* <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/>

*This PBS website is a companion to the PBS film, Islam: Empire of Faith. It includes video clips from the film that could be used in the classroom, an interactive timeline, and information about the faith, culture, innovations, and notable Muslim people. There is also a link to educational resources/lesson plans that can be used with the film.*

* Wilkinson, Philip, and Batul Salazar.*Islam*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2002. Print.

*This book is part of the Eyewitness series and would serve as an appropriate reference material in the intermediate social studies classroom. It is an introduction to Islam containing many photographs of cultural practices, artwork, and artifacts alongside explanations. It avoids controversial topics and discussion of extremist groups.*

Annotated Bibliography: Christianity

* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/>

*This website sponsored by the BBC describes the Christian religion in detail. It includes links in the following categories: Christianity at a Glance, Ethics, Holy Days, Prayer & Study, Symbols, Texts, History, People, Places, Subdivisions, and Saints. Each section is easy to navigate and provides information at an adult reading level. However, portions of the text could be used in the intermediate classroom for research purposes.*

* <http://player.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm?guidAssetId=68379F12-7D04-424A-803F-01F0CC4C04D9&blnFromSearch=1&productcode=US>

*This video through the Discovery Education site outlines the Christian religion through segments totaling 30 minutes. The video can be played in the classroom in its entirely, or more effectively, in segments to relate to the lesson of study. The first segment is entitled “The Teachings of Jesus Christ.” Other segments include information on Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the spread and branching of Christianity.*

* Wilkinson, Philip, and Steve Teague.*Eyewitness Christianity*. Rev. ed. New York: DK Pub., 2006. Print.

*This book is part of the Eyewitness series and would serve as an appropriate reference material in the intermediate social studies classroom. It is an introduction to Christianity containing many photographs of cultural practices, artwork, and artifacts alongside explanations. It is organized into three main sections. The first focuses on the Old Testament, the second on the history and organization of the church, and the third on Christian life today.*

Annotated Bibliography: Judaism

* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/>

*This website sponsored by the BBC describes the Jewish religion in detail. It includes links in the following categories: Judaism at a Glance, Beliefs, Customs, History, the Holocaust, Holy Days, Ethics, People, Rites, Subdivisions, Texts, and Worship. Each section is easy to navigate and provides information at an adult reading level. However, portions of the text could be used in the intermediate classroom for research purposes.*

* <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/heritage/>

*This is a PBS companion website to the series “Heritage: Civilization and the Jews.” It is split into nine chronological episodes spanning from 3800 BC (“A People is Born”) to the 1990’s (“Into the Future”). Each episode includes an informative passage in addition to links to interactive presentations and atlas, historical documents, and video resources. This site is incredibly extensive and thorough. The historical documents would be excellent to incorporate primary sources into classroom study. The main page also has links to lesson plans that are paired with each of the nine episodes.*

* Charing, Douglas. *Judaism*. New York, N.Y.: DK Pub., 2003. Print.

*This book is part of the Eyewitness series and would serve as an appropriate reference material in the intermediate social studies classroom. It is an introduction to Judaism containing many photographs of cultural practices, artwork, and artifacts alongside explanations. It tells the historical background of the Jewish religion, explains Jewish traditions, details important festivals and symbols, and outlines contributions made by notable Jewish scientists, doctors, and artists.*

**Application**

Buddhism:

Buddhism is based on the life and teachings of Buddha, who was born in India about 2500 years ago. Buddha was born a prince and lived a sheltered and luxurious lifestyle for 29 years. One day, he discovered human suffering which led him on a quest to answer the questions, “Why do human beings suffer?” and, “Is there any escape from suffering?” He gave up his worldly possessions to become a beggar and even practiced extreme asceticism (inflicting physical suffering on himself) in an attempt to reach enlightenment and break the cycle of death and rebirth, thereby ending suffering. From a realization of compassion and worldly connectivity, he discovered this would not work.

His analysis of suffering resulted in the Four Noble Truths. These truths state that there is suffering in this world, but that its cause is within the human mind. Humans can be free of suffering by understanding desire is its cause and by practicing mindfulness. He taught that there are three poisons in the world: greed, anger, and ignorance. Through meditation and mindfulness, people can turn greed into generosity, anger into compassion, and ignorance into wisdom. Nirvana, or absolute bliss, can be found in ordinary moments of ordinary life as long as we attempt to see it. Buddhism spread from India to Sri Lanka, central and southeast Asia, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and in the twentieth century, Europe and the Americas.

Hinduism:

Hinduism is the oldest living religion and practiced by the majority of people living in India and Nepal. Although it is thought to have originated in the Indus Valley region, it is unique in that it has no single founder, scripture, or common set of teachings to define it. In fact, Hinduism is very difficult to define because it is practiced in such a variety of ways and includes a variety of beliefs. For example, some Hindus claim to be polytheistic while others are monotheistic.

However, there are some overarching beliefs practiced by most Hindus. For most, the sacred scripture is the Veda and the system of values is the Dharma. There is a belief in samsara (reincarnation) that is guided by karma, meaning the quality of the next life depends on the how the previous life was lived. Many Hindus devote themselves to one of three gods: Brahma (creator of the cosmos), Vishnu (preserver of the cosmos), or Shiva (destroyer of the cosmos). The most widely known holy day is called Divali which is the festival of lights- a celebration of the victory of good over evil (light over darkness).

Islam:

The religion of Islam is the second largest practiced religion in the world. Followers of Islam are called Muslims and their beliefs are based on the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad over 1400 years ago in Mecca, Arabia. Muslims believe Muhammad to be the final prophet of a line of prophets sent to spread the word of God. Other prophets include Jesus, Moses, and Abraham. Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad are spelled out in the Qur’an, the Islamic holy book.

The five pillars of Islam are: Shahadah (declaration of faith), Salat (prayer 5 times each day), Zakat (giving money to charity), Sawn (fasting during Ramadan), and Hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca at least one time). Generally speaking, Muslims believe in Allah (one God), angels, the holy books, the prophets, a Day of Judgment, and predestination. Predestination means that Allah knows what will happen, but that humans still have the power of free choice. Jihad is the term used to describe the three types of struggle experienced by Muslims. There is an internal struggle to live out the Muslim faith, a struggle to build a good Muslim society, and a struggle to defend Islam. This last struggle is often referred to as Holy War and is oftentimes misconstrued in the media as the sole meaning of Jihad. In fact, most practicing Muslims regard Jihad as the internal struggle.

Of the holy days celebrated by Muslims, Ramadan is the most well-known. It takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and lasts for 30 days. During that time, Muslims are expected to fast during daylight hours. This month is sacred to Muslims because it is the month that the Qur’an was first revealed. Muslims also believe that the gates to Heaven are open during this month and those to Hell are closed.

Christianity:

Although there are many subdivisions within Christianity, Christians are united in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God who was sent to save humans from the original sin that all humans are born with. They believe that he was crucified on the cross (Crucifixion), rose from the dead (Resurrection), and went to heaven in order to save people from sin and Hell. Christians believe there are three elements to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, Christianity is a monotheistic religion. The Christian holy book is the Bible and includes both the Old and New Testaments. Easter and Christmas are the most well-known of the Christian holy days. On Christmas, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus and on Easter, they celebrate his death and Resurrection.

Among the many subdivisions of Christianity are: Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostalism, Eastern Orthodox, and Quaker. Each subdivision practices different rites, rituals, and traditions. Each also has a different hierarchy of religious leaders. For example, some subdivisions have priests and nuns while others have ministers or pastors.

Judaism:

Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are known as the three Abrahamic faiths. Of the three, Judaism is the original, dating back to over 3500 years ago. Its origins are in the Middle East and the faith is said to be founded by Moses. Jewish people believe in one God. They commit to keeping God’s laws and bringing holiness into every aspect of their lives in exchange for the good things God has done for them. Their most religious text is called the Torah. The Torah consists of the five books of Moses which were dictated to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. It is written in Hebrew and contains 613 commandments. The traditional laws contained in the Torah are knows as the halakhah.

Jewish people worship in Synagogues and their religious leaders are called rabbis. The faith is family and community based. The holy day of the week is Saturday, the Sabbath or Shabbat, and last from nightfall on Friday to Saturday night. Jewish people are to keep this day holy by attending Synagogue, avoiding work, and spending time with family. Three of the holy days in the Jewish calendar are Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. Passover is a commemoration of the liberation of the Children of Israel, who were led out of Egypt by Moses. Rosh Hashanah, a celebration of the creation of the world, is just 10 days before Yom Kippur, which marks the end of the 10 days of Repentance.

During World War II, Hitler sought to eradicate the Jewish population. This period in history is known as the Holocaust, and at least six million Jewish people were killed during this time.

***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***