***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***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.8. Modern cultural practices and products show the influence of tradition and diffusion, including the impact of major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism).**Buddhism:** Lee, J. M. (1999). *I once was a monkey: Stories buddha told*. (1 ed., pp. 1-40). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.Harvey, P. (2012). *An introduction to buddhism teachings, history and practices*. (2 ed., pp. 1-552). Cambridge University Press.Barrow, M. (n.d.). *Buddhism religion*. Retrieved from <http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/>homework/religion/buddhism.htm **Hinduism:** Das, S. (n.d.). *Hinduism beliefs and practices*. Retrieved from <http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics>/u/beliefs\_practices.htm Bhaskarananda, S. (2002). *The essentials of hinduism*. Viveka Press.Patel, S. (2006). *The little book of hindu deities: From the goddess of wealth to the sacred cow*. Plume.**Islam:** Ahmad, H. M. (2003). *Teachings of islam*. Kessinger Publishing.Denffer, A. V. (2009). *Islam for children*. The Islamic Foundation.*Teaching about islam, the middle east*. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.educationworld.com/>a\_curr/profdev009.shtml **Christianity:** Packer, J. I. (2001). *Concise theology: A guide to historic christian beliefs*. (pp. 1-288). Tyndale House Publisher: Lewis, C. S. (2005). *The lion, the witch, and the wardrobe*. HarperFestival.*A brief introduction to christianity*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/>religion/christianity.html **Judaism:***Core ethical teachings of judaism* . (2007). Retrieved from http://www.ijs.org.au/The-Ethical-Teachings-of-Judaism/default.aspx Blech, R. B. (2003). *The complete idiot's guide to understanding judaism*. (3 ed.). Alpha.Gross, J. (2005). *Celebrate: A book of jewish holidays*. Grosset & Dunlap. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion*****Buddhism:** Buddhism came to be out of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who eventually took on the title of Buddha. He promoted “The Middle Way” as the path to enlightenment. Long after Buddha had died, his teachings were written down in a collection called the Tripitaka. Buddhists believe in reincarnation and that people must go through cycles of birth, life, and death. After many of these cycles, they can eventually attain Nirvana. In general, Buddhists do not believe in any type of God, a savior, prayer, nor eternal life. **Christianity:** Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God. Christians believe that Jesus is a teacher, a model of a perfect life, the revealer of God, and most importantly the savoir of humanity. They believe he suffered, died, and was resurrected in order to bring salvation from sin. Christians believe that Jesus ascended into heaven after his resurrection. Christians use the Bible as their main source of scriptures. **Hinduism:** The origins of Hinduism can be traced to the Indus Valley civilization. The basis of Hinduism is the belief in the unity of everything (Brahman). Hindus believe that the purpose of life is to realize that we are part of God and after eventually we will rejoin with God. This enlightenment is achieved by going through cycles of birth, life and death (samsara). Progress towards enlightenment is measured by karma. **Islam:** Islam was founded in 622CE by Muhammad. Muslims view their religion as the same faith taught by the prophets in the Bible (Abraham, David, Moses, and Jesus). They believe that Muhammad was the last prophet and that his role was to formalize and clarify the faith. All Muslims have certain duties: •Recite the shahadah at least once. •Perform the salat (prayer) 5 times a day while facing the Kaaba in Makkah •Donate regularly to charity via the zakat, a 2.5% charity tax, and through additional donations to the needy. •Fast during the month of Ramadan, the month that Muhammad received the Qur'an from Allah. •Make pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in life, if economically and physically possible.**Judaism:** Jews believe in the teachings of the old testament of the Bible. However, they do not believe that Jesus was the savior. Jews believe in one creator who alone should be worshipped as the absolute ruler. Jews believe in inherent goodness of the world and that people do not require a savior to save them from sin. [http://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/ Portals/0/Downloads/Program/EMU-WorldReligions.pdf](http://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/Program/EMU-WorldReligions.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) |
| ***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.*****Competency 1:** Because talking about religion can cause tension between students if not done respectively, the text discussed the importance of fostering a climate of tolerance by: * “move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements—from, for example, “All Christians are intolerant” to “I have heard that Christians are intolerant—is this true?” Or to “Some Christians are intolerant”;

•examine how their judgments may impact others; and•explore ideas and ask questions without fear.” (p. 12). “Not everyone in the class is expected to agree. But students should understand that:* the goal is developing awareness and understanding; and
* accurate representations of traditions reduce the misunderstandings arising from false generalizations, bigotry, or valorization of a particular religious or non-religious worldview” (p. 12).

**Competency 2:** **“**Teachers are expected to teach about religion in a variety of ways in their classrooms. The three most common occur when1. the curriculum demands coverage of the historical origins of religious traditions or their contemporary relevance;2. the novels or stories they teach have explicit religious themes or allusions; and3. their students raise questions based on their own experiences and knowledge” (p. 9). “Mr. Y.’s fourth-grade social studies curriculum focuses on North American geography and peoples. His students learn about the lives of native communities in the U.S. and Canada before and during the time that European explorers and colonists began to make contact with the continent. He is also eager to include contemporary representations of the communities he is exploring and selects a few for students to research in groups and to present reflections regarding how the traditions have evolved and changed over the years and how core values have been interpreted and preserved” (p. 13). **Competency 3:**“ Making this distinction clear to students before embarking on any lessons that relate to religion will1. help them realize that learning about religion is a legal and appropriate undertaking for public schools, and2. help them realize that the aim of teaching about religion is to better understand the religious dimensions of human experience, not to promote religion or a particular religious perspective.” (p. 11). “Brainstorming quickly can help students identify their most basic associations, those rooted in long experience and snap judgment. It is important to be explicit with students about why an examination of their assumptions is a critical first step in their learning. By explaining how biases and assumptions can act as a filter on new knowledge, they gain an important tool that they can return to again and again throughout their explorations about religion specifically and other topics more generally. In addition, by reflecting on their own preconceived ideas about religion, 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).  | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency*****Competency 1:** After reading this portion of the text, I recognize that before teaching religion, I need to be very clear on my expectations for students. I need to be a model for them and make sure I am being respectful of all religions when discussing. This would be something that would take explicit instructions and practice. **Competency 2:**  After reading, I recognize that there are a few major approaches to teaching religion. Keeping these approaches in mind can help me teach the material effectively. **Competency 3:** I need to make sure I am spending ample time on teaching each of the major world religions. I need to make sure I am not showing bias towards any religion by spending more time on a certain one.  |
| *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 believe I would be most likely to use the historical or literacy approach when teaching religion. This is because I feel as though they seamlessly fit into the curriculum. I have seen both of these used in my education; however, we did not delve into a variety of topics. When my teachers have used the historical approach, I remember them talking about a certain culture or civilization's beliefs. However, they did not discuss the practices or history behind the actual religion. Same with in literacy! I think this is because teachers get nervous to delve into the background of the religion. *What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***Competency 1:** “The school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional.• The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any religion.• The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.7• The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.• The school educates about all religions, it does not promote or denigrate religion.• The school informs students about various beliefs; it does not seek to conform students to any particular belief” (p. 7-8). Competency 2: “When addressing difficult questions, teachers should help students remember that the goal of the academic study of religion is understanding, not agreement, and that different religious views may and often will conflict with one another. Nor is the academic study of religion designed to answer the same types of questions that religious communities answer for believers. Questions about what is the “right” or “true” belief are theological questions and not ones that teachers can answer for students in a class focused on the study of religion.It is also important to know that many common questions about religion frequently represent a host of problematic assumptions that are often too involved to address in the moment but which can be “flagged” for later follow up in a class discussion or incorporation into a lesson” (p. 15). Competency 3: I think it is important to make sure I am spending an ample amount of time on each religion when teaching religion. Spending more time on a certain religion gives students the impression that one is more important than the other. Also, this ensures that in a classroom of diverse religious backgrounds each student has a time to share his or her own religious background. Competency 4: the text discussed the importance of fostering a climate of tolerance by: * “move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements—from, for example, “All Christians are intolerant” to “I have heard that Christians are intolerant—is this true?” Or to “Some Christians are intolerant”;

•examine how their judgments may impact others; and•explore ideas and ask questions without fear.” (p. 12).  | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***I remember in my schooling, we did a huge unit on the Holocaust in middle school. We read books like *The Diary of Ann Frank* and learned about the war in Social Studies. This unit would be a perfect opportunity to discuss the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity since these religious beliefs had a huge impact on the world war. Depending on the grade level I taught, I could see myself using the Holocaust and either the literacy or historical approach to teach religion. In order to practice appropriate discussion on touchy subjects in the classroom, I could model a great discussion with the colleague. Then, I could point out to students that although we disagreed on the topic, we were respectful and appropriate in our discussion.  |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection******10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?*** I am really glad we had the opportunity to thoroughly look through this document in class. I was unaware that guidelines even existed for teaching religion. I know feel well equipped to teach the content of religion both effectively and fairly. However, the true test will be actually putting it into practice in the classroom. I still feel a bit nervous to teach the material because of reactions from parents and students; however, I feel as though if I communicate the benefits I can prove to students and parents that it is worthwhile.  | ***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 think that the River Civilizations lend themselves to discussing various religions. For example, the region near the Yellow River eventually practiced Buddhism and the Hinduism originated in the Indus Valley. So, while teaching the various river civilizations, I would make sure to objectively discuss the origins of the major religions we have today. Relating the very primitive stages of the religion to what it looks like today.  |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |