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July 27, 2014

***Teaching about World Religions using the AAR Pedagogical Competencies***

***“Scavenger Hunt”***

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| ***Pedagogical Competencies*** | ***Explore/Research/Reflect*** | ***Application*** |
| ***Station 1 (20 points)**** Identify the ONLS 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 ONLS. Then develop an annotated bibliography: Identify 3 Resources for each of the world religions(incl. young adolescent literature): Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism*** | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion*** |
| **ONLS that focuses on World Religions:**G6: Strand – Geography; Topic – Human Systems; Content Statement 8* Modern and cultural practices and products show the influence of tradition and diffusion, including the impact of major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism).

**ONLS that includes the study of World Religions, but not a focus:**G6: Strand – History; Topic – Early Civilizations; 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.

G6: Strand – Geography; Topic – Human Systems; Content Statement 7* Political, environmental, and social and environmental factors cause people, products and ideas to move from place to place in the Eastern Hemisphere in the past and today.
 | **Buddhism:**Buddhism was born 2500 years ago in India. One day, a prince named Siddhartha went on a journey and encountered four sights: a sick man, an old man, a dead man, and a monk. From his experience, Siddhartha went on a journey to find the basic truths of life, and finally found them. He was then named Buddha, or “enlightened one” as he was enlightened and reached nirvana.The practice of Buddhism follows the four noble truths. Buddha also taught the way to enlightenment or nirvana was the middle way and there are 8 guides for following the middle way which is known as the eightfold path. All Buddhists follow a guideline for daily life called The Five Precepts which are as follows: 1. Do not harm or kill living things, 2. Do not take things unless they are freely given, 3. Lead a decent life, 4. Do not speak unkindly or tell lies, and 5. Do not abuse drugs or drink alcohol.One of the major practices of Buddhism is called meditation which calls for the mind to focus in order to achieve inner stillness. The common place for Buddhists to worship is in temples, although many Buddhists practice in their own homes. In regards to a “book” that defines the beliefs of the religion, Buddhism follows the ripitaka which is a collection of Buddha’s sayings, his thoughts, and his rules for monks.While Buddhism originated in India, it quickly traveled to China through trade lines and is observed throughout all of Chinese culture and eventually spread to Japan. As the religion spread, two different schools of Buddhism developed: Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada, or the “teaching of Elders” spread in the southern direction to where Indonesia is today and Mahayana, or the “greater vehicle” spread in the northern direction to China, Japan, and Korea. While these different schools are practiced, both of them believe in the cycle of rebirth until the enlightenment of nirvana is reached which marks the end of suffering and the cycle of rebirth.**Hinduism:**Hinduism originated in India about 4,000 years ago near the ancient River Indus Civilization. It is believed to be the oldest religion in the world. While it is considered a polytheistic religion, Brahman is the universal soul found in everything and thus Brahman is worshipped in many different forms such as Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, and Shiva.The written foundation for the Hindu religion is held in the Vedas or the holy books as well as the Rig Veda which is a long Sanskrit poem which mentions many gods. Their belief system is centered on karma and that every action has an effect in life. Thus, you continue through reincarnation of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth until one completes Maya and reaches Moksha or freedom and liberation.In order for Hindus to train their mind, they practice different forms of yoga which help them unify their individual self with their inner spirit. Also, they daily practice dharma, which is a code of behavior. In Hinduism, there are four main social positions one could be born into: Brahmins (priests and teachers), Kshatriyas (rulers and soldiers), Vaishyas (merchants), or Shudras (workers). Each position practices the worshiping of their gods in a temple through puja, or the worship ceremony. In the temples, shrines are set up for particular gods and many bring in fruits and items to leave there in honor of the gods. In Hinduism, the Ganges River is also an important symbol and many travel there to bath in the waters.**Islam**A religion which is based on the worship of one God, Allah who was channeled through the last prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia and had people scribe his communications with Allah in the Koran which is known as the holy book.Most Islam or Muslims live in Indonesia and India and are either a Sunni (80%) or Shiite (20%). They share the same beliefs but disagree on who the leader is after the death of Muhammad.Muslims pray five times a day. While their place of worship is a mosque, they do not have to be there to pray. Their beliefs are as follows: one god, belief in angels, belief in holy books belief in prophets sent by god, belief in a day of judgment and life after death, and belief in the divine decree.The five pillars of Islam are guides for daily life that Muslims follow. They are: shahadah (declaration of faith), salat (ritual prayer), zakah (alms tax), sawm (fasting), and hajj (pilgrimage).**Christianity**A religion dating back more than 2,000 years ago in present day Israel began when a child named Jesus of Nazareth was born to Mary in a Jewish family in Bethlehem. Christians believe in one God, as Jesus was the son of God whom God sent to the people to free them from sin. Thus, Jesus was both human and divine. He lived his life as an example for those to follow and eventually suffered death by being crucified on the cross. The third day after his death, his tomb was empty as he had rose from the dead and given eternal life with God the Father. This is seen as God’s sign of salvation offered to all people.Jesus was God’s messenger and taught people to live a good life by loving God and treating neighbors as you would yourself. He also encouraged following the ten commandments which Christians still follow today. The written word of Christianity is found in the Bible in the Old and New Testaments. Christians believe in both books as the Old Testament describes creation and life before the coming of Jesus and the New Testament is filled with teachings of Jesus and examples of how to live life.Christians worship the Holy Trinity, or the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit in churches on Sunday the Sabbath. The worship ceremony includes prayers, hymns, readings and a sermon which is given by an ordained priest or minister. Christians receive the holy Eucharist, or Jesus’ body and blood, during church which represents the last supper Jesus shared with people on Earth.Christians have many celebrations which center around the life and death of Jesus which include Christmas, Advent, and Easter. Christians believe that Jesus will come again and that God will forgive all who ask to be forgiven and give them life everlasting with him in heaven.**Judaism**Judaism began approximately 4,000 years ago in the Middle East. Abraham is known as the father of Judaism as he was the one to say there is only one God. Abraham is also considered a prophet of God and told the people that as long as they obey God’s laws, God will care for them.After Abraham, the next most influential person in the Jewish faith was Moses who led the people out of slavery in Egypt to the promise land. He also gave the people the ten commandments which they still follow this day as they are the basis for the Jewish holy book the Torah.Jewish people believe that in “exchange for all God has done for his people, Jewish people keep God’s laws and try to bring holiness to every aspect of their lives.” They live and worship in communities at a synagogue where the ceremony is led by a rabbi through prayers, songs, chants, readings, and a sermon. Depending on the Jewish group (one of three: orthodox, conservative, or reform) Jewish people may worship at the synagogue every day or on Shabbat which is from sundown each Friday and lasts until dark on Saturday. Shabbat is a special day in that is signifies the seventh day of creation in which God rested. When worshiping, Jewish people read the Torah, or the book of Jewish law by section until it is completed and then they read it all over again.People of the Judaism religion practice many holidays or festivals such as Rosh Hashanah (Jewish new year) and Passover (liberation from slavery in Egypt) which represent important times in their history. |
| **Annotated Bibliography:****World Religion – Buddhism****Demi. (1996). *Buddha*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.**The children’s book, *Buddha*, is a 44 page book written for students ages 9 – 12. In this book, students are exposed to the story of Siddhartha and his journey to enlightenment which ends under the bohhi tree. It not only eloquently tells the story of the origin of Buddhism, but the pictures help tell the story for students and will give them an artistic appreciation of the religion and culture. An explanation of the basic facts of the Buddhist faith which includes the Eightfold Path and the Noble Truths is included in his life story. This would be a great introduction for students in the study of the Buddhism religion.**Smithsonian Institution. (2001). *The art of Buddhism - A teacher's guide*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED471478.pdf**This source is a teaching packet which includes the history of Buddhism in the influence on the cultures in three different countries: India, China, and Japan. Before outlining lesson plans, this guide gives teachers background on Buddhism including a general overview, the birth of Buddhism in India, Buddhism in China, Buddhism in India, and Buddhism today. It also includes important vocabulary and definitions which are important in understanding the religion.The packet includes four lesson plans. Two on the elementary level, one on the middle school level, and one on the high school level. The middle school lesson plan covers Buddhist symbols in art. After the lesson plans, the packet continues to give teachers additional resources teachers can use to help deepen their understanding of Buddhism. The additional resources include books, magazines, films, videos, websites, location of Buddhist temples, and national educational resources.**United Religions Initiative (Ed.). (n.d.). Buddhism. Retrieved July 26, 2014, from http://www.uri.org/kids/world\_budd.htm**This website was created by the URI and reviews several key aspects of Buddhism for students. This source is excellent as it allows students to click and read through the information at their own pace and it is written on their reading level for easier understanding. The first page is characterized by important illustrations that depict important aspects of Buddhism such as the meaning of the word “Buddha”, the eight-spoked wheel and how it is related to the eight-fold path, a monk in traditional clothes, and a Buddhist temple. Students then can click through the four tabs at the top to learn more about Buddhism celebrations, sacred spaces, basic beliefs, and additional resources for research such as a glossary, links, and books.**World Religion – Hinduism****Cooper, A. (2010). *The facts about Hinduism*. New York, NY: Rosen Publishing Group.**This is a book for students and is written in a question and answer form. It is written in a very basic way and answer questions that cover foundational facts such as how Hinduism began and what Hindu practitioners believe. This book “provides a factual insight into the Hindu faith and its history, practices and beliefs.”**Hinduism Today Magazine. (2014, June 27). *The history of Hindu India* [Video file]. Retrieved from**  **http://www.himalayanacademy.com/view/the-history-of-hindu-india\_part-1**This is an excellent video which is approximately 23 minutes long and covers the birth of Hinduism in the Indus Valley Civilization through to present day practice. It was created and produced by Hinduism Today Magazine and is very well narrated with easy to understand details about the Hindu religion. The visuals are excellent as are the religious chants and descriptions of the gods and goddesses. The video covers many basic facts from the origin of Hinduism approximately 6,000 years ago through the four vedas, or central holy books, up through the class systems and celebrations. This is an excellent video to use as a source of information as a teacher, as well as a great video to show to 6th grade students. Additionally, the original site this video is published on also includes downloadable free textbooks to teach Hinduism in social studies classes across all grade levels.**United Religions Initiative. (n.d.). Hinduism. Retrieved July 26, 2014, from http://www.uri.org/kids/world\_hind.htm**This is an excellent source for teachers and students to get foundational knowledge about Hinduism such as how the religion began, what they believe and practice, the manifestations of God in Hinduism, the different sects of Hinduism, the code of behavior that Hindu’s follow and the sacred texts. This site also describes the festivals that Hinduism celebrates such as Diwali, Holi, Dussehra, and Kumbha Mela. **World Religion - Islam****Douglass, S. (n.d.). An introduction to Islam. In *The Arab world in the classroom*. Georgetown University.**This is a 13 page document written by a teacher to help other teachers learn about Islam. She focuses on several areas such as: the basic beliefs of Islam, Shahada – the Islamic creed, what a mosque is, the five pillars, and foundations of Islamic ethics and values. This document also goes in depth into what a daily prayer, or salat, looks like with the movements and recitations that make up one unit of Islamic daily prayer.Susan Douglass also includes several suggested teaching activities that can be used in the classroom. She includes a discussion of Islam today as well as contemporary issues and Islamic principles and human rights. At the end of the document, she includes several teaching resources and websites you can use to learn more.**Gordon, M. S. (2002). *World Religions (Facts on File): Islam* (Third ed.). New York, NY: Duncan Baird Publishers.**This book is written for middle school students who are interested in learning the basics of Islam. It begins with a description of the misconception of the Islam religion in light of the events that have recently happened. Thus, it starts with a good foundation that can help prompt a conversation about the variety inside different religions and how the media is involved with perceptions. The book covers information about the Koran and covers the different branches of Islam such as the Sunni and the Shiite and the falling out between their sects. The book continues to describe Islamic life, customs and rituals from the past to the present.**Islam. (n.d.). Retrieved July 26, 2014, from https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/islam** This website is great for student research and written in student friendly language. It describes the origins of Islam as well as the role of the prophet of Muhammad, the Koran, mosques, and the five pillars. One excellent feature of this website are the pictures that show different aspects of Islam such as a picture of the Koran, a mosque, a video of Mecca, a map of Islam, and a 13 minute video appropriate for students on Islam basics and the 5 pillars.**World Religion – Christianity****Christianity. (n.d.). Retrieved July 27, 2014, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/** This website is very student friendly and gives a brief overview of Christianity along with several links students can click on to learn more about Christian beliefs, Christmas, ethics, history, holy days, people, places, the Pope, prayer and study, priests and nuns, rites and rituals, saints, subdivisions, symbols, texts, and women. In each of these links, there are additional links that students are able to explore. One section which is very helpful is the subdivisions, as it reviews the different branches of Christianity and how/why they formed.**Osborne, M. P. (1996). *One world, many religions: The ways we worship*. New York, NY: Knopf Books for Young Readers.**This book does not focus strictly on Christianity, but also includes a study of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. I included this resource here because I think it is excellent for students to have information about all religions in one place written in a similar format so they can be compared and contrasted. The book includes the history, beliefs, and practices of Christianity along with other world religions written on a middle school level. Additionally, the book includes how each religion has shaped the customs of every country include the effects it has had on art, literature, music and education. I love the timeline feature and feel it can be used to help view the origin of religions as well as allow students to practice making/reading timelines as is required by the ONLS in 6th grade. Not only is the information helpful for understanding Christianity, but the pictures also allow students who may be on a lower reading level to learn about the religion and world religions.**Robinson, B. A. (2014). Christianity: The world's largest religion. Retrieved July 27, 2014, from**  **http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ.htm** This website is mostly intended for teacher education as the language may be too difficult for students to understand. That being said, if students were working on a research project, they could use sections of this website for information, just not all of it. This website is said to be compiled from a multi-religious group of people who did their best to include information that is focused on the study of religion and not devotional studies. This website includes many links which you can explore to learn more about the foundation of Christianity through different published research papers and essays. One section which I feel is very strong on this website is the information about the Bible.**World Religion – Judaism****Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars*. New York, NY: HMH Books for Young Readers.**This is a children’s book which won the Newbery Medal in 1990. This book does not describe the details about the Jewish religion, but rather takes students on a journey of what it was like to practice Judaism during World War II in Europe and all of the outside issues that impact religion. This is an excellent book to use as a read-aloud during the study of Judaism as it follows a family who takes in a Jewish girl and pretends that she is their own so she is not caught by the Nazis. This book not only will intrigue students to learn more about Judaism, but it will also allow them to see how religion is tied to many facets of life.**My Jewish learning. (n.d.). Retrieved July 27, 2014, from http://www.myjewishlearning.com/**This is a present day website for teachers and students to learn about Judaism holidays, life, culture, beliefs, practices, history, and texts. This is an excellent opportunity for students to read or learn about Judaism in a manner that is more familiar to them. They can click on beliefs and read about free will, God, the afterlife, or they can read blogs to see what current practitioners are discussing about their faith today. One of my favorite sections that many religion information books or websites leave out is the culture page which includes information about Jewish art, film, food, humor, languages, literature, music, sports, theater and dance. I think this section allows students to see how religion permeates every inch of life and culture.**Social studies for kids - Judaism. (n.d.). Retrieved July 27, 2014, from**  **http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/judaism.htm**This website is a great source for students if they are working on a research project on the Judaism religion. This site is created specifically for kids who are studying social studies and offers them information they can learn about major Jewish holidays, the Jewish calendar, and ceremonies such as bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvah. One of the links takes students to the Jewish virtual library <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/index.html> where students can explore further details such as Judaic treasures, maps, politics, and myths and facts.  |
| ***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**** Point #1: (AAR pg. 12) In order to lead a productive discussion in relation to religious studies, “it is imperative to foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty by encouraging students to move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements, examine how their judgments may impact others, and explore ideas and ask questions without fear.
* Point #2: (AAR pg. 15) When engaging in a class discussion there may be “many common questions about religion” that “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.”
* Best Practice #1 (AAR pg. 13): This best practice focuses on building from prior knowledge such as “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 or worldviews.”
* Best Practice #2 (AAR pg. 11) This best practice is related to helping students understand why they are learning what they are learning and how it relates to real life. Additionally, it helps to appropriately set up the lesson so students know what is expected of them. Therefore, teachers must explicitly explain to students the difference between the study of religion and religious devotional studies by “making this distinction clear to students before embarking on any lessons that relate to religion”.
* One way to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way is to focus on the key aspect as noted on page 23 of the AAR which states that “One way to do so it to supplement whatever text is used with specific and contrasting case study examples to represent these elements within each tradition.”
* Another way in which a teacher can promote the fair and neutral way in presenting religious perspectives is to “utilize films or personal written narratives to provide at least two differing representations of a given tradition or perspective to give students exposure to some dimension of diversity within a tradition.” (AAR pg. 23)
 | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency**** It is imperative to build a classroom of respect for all at the beginning of the year. One way to do this would be to do many “get to know you” activities which focus on students differences and acceptance of those differences and how they make our world unique and successful. One way to bring culture into the discussion would be to have a world culture day where students bring in the recipe along with a story that best demonstrates their culture. Then, maybe later in the year, students can bring in their dishes for all to share.
* It is understandable that sometimes, as a teacher, we are not equipped in the moment to deal with some heated issues based on religion. Thus, a strategy that would help a situation which might arise when discussing religious issues would be the “parking lot” strategy. If the class discussion is going in a direction that you find may be problematic, you can raise your hand and say: “pit stop”. This would signify that student brought up an excellent idea that we need to do more research on to have an informed and productive conversation. Then, you take out a post-it note and write the idea down and put it in the “parking lot” spot in your classroom for future reference. Then, you can incorporate that topic into future lessons, or have students who need enrichment do research and bring it to the class at another time for a deeper discussion.
* One way to apply building of foundational knowledge in the classroom is first to do a survey of the class so you, as a teacher, are away of the religious diversity of the student body. Then, you are able to understand where students are coming from and what prior knowledge they may have. Another method of doing this would be to put the religion names on the board and giving students about five minutes to write down everything they know. Then, you can use that formative to guide how you will introduce the study of other religious traditions.
* As a teacher, it is important to set your classroom climate up for an understanding of the final learning goal of any lesson. Thus, when discussing religion, it is especially important to discuss with 6th graders the difference between the study of religion and the study of devotional religion. One way to do this may be a card sort where you have pictures and words describing a way to study religion and what it would look like to devotionally study it so students can actually see and determine the difference.
* As a classroom teacher, it is important to expose students to many different sources so they have the opportunity to create their own understanding of the traditions of a religion. Thus, an important strategy is using both primary and secondary sources from different viewpoints and have students analyze them for a common theme. A great way to compare perspectives is to give students two differing accounts on the same religious tradition or topic and have them fill in a “thought bubble” graphic organizer that asks them to put themselves in the shoes of both of the authors of the pieces and then compare and contrast them.
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| ***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?***Personally, I have a hard time choosing one approach to follow strictly as I see myself following both the historical approach as well as the cultural studies approach. Because I have become aware of the 6th grade standards, I believe a combination of these methods would be best for the knowledge students are asked to gain. The historical approach seems important to incorporate when teaching about the early civilizations and different aspects of culture and how religion shaped the actions of the people. Knowing this is an important piece of history, it would be imperative that I took it upon myself to do professional development on the major world religions so I can best help my students learn. The reason why I would strictly employ this method in teaching about religions is because I feel it is also important to connect learning to present day life and how the religion affects our world today. If I only followed the historical approach, this aspect would be missing. Thus, I would include some of the cultural studies approach so as to show how “embedded” religion is in culture and the impact it had not only on past events, but those occurring today. I would like to convey to students that religion is not a separate entity, but something that is intertwined in society and relies upon us as interpreters of information. If we are more educated about the diversity around us, we can be more accepting and understanding of what it means and what it looks like when culture collide in different types of environments, such as the political environment. ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?**** I understand this competency to differentiate between different teaching methods of religion which can be defined as the type of approach that disseminates knowledge. The secular academic approach is one that educates students about the practices and history of religion as is required for the understanding of a particular religion. The devotional approach is one in which a teacher would teach students how to practice the religion by teaching a way of beliefs students should follow. It is very important, when teaching about religion, to set aside your personal devotional beliefs and help students see the structure and information about each religion in an unbiased and strictly informational way.
* The ability to address disagreements and conflicts that might arise in the classroom in a constructive way means first being a prepared teacher with sufficient knowledge about the religions and areas that may be somewhat controversial. Then, it means being prepared with strategies to guide conversations that may get heated or “flag” them for future discussion as to keep the classroom atmosphere one of acceptance and respect. I truly believe one of the main ways to help constructively in this manner is discussing with students before the study of religion, the purpose of study is to learn about different religions not to agree or disagree with them. Share students that it is like a history lesson where we are gaining information just to learn more, not to become followers. Just preparing students in this way can impact the classroom climate in a positive way.
* This competency, to me, means knowing your students and the community from which they come. Thus, it is important to gather data from the community on the types of religious practices that are dominant. It would also be helpful to ask leading questions on interest surveys such as: what is your favorite holiday? Then, you can get a general understanding of the religious make-up of your class and know how to approach different topics. For example, if many students are Jewish, then discussing a the Jewish book the Torah before discussing the Koran might be a good way to help students see the relationship between important religious books and how many religions have something similar.
* To me, this is one of the most important topics covered in the document that not only benefits the study of religion, but the study of every subject. It is important to create an environment where students feel safe to speak their mind so as to share their ideas so you can build upon their knowledge and take them to the next level of understanding. If students are afraid to speak because they feel they will get made fun of, that is one less voice or opinion that adds to the deep diversity of learning opportunities students can bring to any topic.
 | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.**** One way I can implement my approach would be in regards to the study of the ancient river valley civilizations. For each civilization, I would have students research the religion that was practiced by many of the people and describe how it permeated through different parts of the community such as games, writings, jewelry, etc. Then, I would ask students to draw a poster of a few times that relate the religion to how the people lived their live back then. After students completed this, I would ask them to research aspects of the same religion today and see if there are still the same symbols or practices. Then, I would ask them to create a poster that shows how people today practice the religion. Finally, I would have students write a description of why they feel some aspects of the religion changed. I would ask them to focus on what outside forces may have had an impact on the religious practices of the people.
* Another way I would implement my approach is to jigsaw the five major religions. This means dividing the class into five different groups and each one is responsible for creating a project on their assigned religion. I would leave the method of delivery of information open to the class (video, play, Prezi, PowerPoint, radio script, etc.). Students would be asked to research many aspects of their assigned religion and relate them to movement, place, region, location, and human environment interaction or the 5 themes of geography and create a timeline from the birth of the religion until today. Then, I would ask them to find an article about a great thing happening in the religion today and something not so great and incorporate those into their research. Students will share their presentations with each other as students write down key details about the religion from the presentations in a graphic organizer.
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| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection******10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development, pedagogy and thinking about teaching social studies?***After reading the AAR document, I feel it was the first step in my professional development in regards to teaching world religions. I learned the basic terminology such as the secular academic and devotional approaches to teaching religion and ways that would help cultivate a classroom climate that is imperative when discussing religion and topics related to religious traditions. This document also allowed me to see how much deeper my personal knowledge must become on the different world religions in order to facilitate successful discussions and learning in my classroom.In regards to pedagogy, I feel many strategies covered in the AAR are best practices as I employ in my every day classroom. But, the one topic that I do not technically practice is gathering information on the religious make-up of my community. I feel like I understand the community I teach in, but I do not have concrete numbers nor have I done true research. Thus, this is one aspect of pedagogy, of knowing my students backgrounds that I really need to employ this upcoming year. Another pedagogy practice that I would like to find models of (maybe in online videos) is how to manage a religion discussion that hits on topics that may be too involved to discuss at the moment. How would teachers successfully and seamlessly change the route of the conversation so as to “set aside” the topic for a later discussion? Truthfully, the incorporation of teaching world religions in social studies is yet another topic that I am extremely interested in but never related with social studies. My initial view of social studies is one of memorizing facts of events and places and names of people, not about the culture of people. I would love the opportunity to teach 6th grade social studies for the fact that it includes a study of world religions. I feel having an appreciation of peoples’ differences is not only something we need to know about in relation to human interactions and the world, but it is also an important underlying concept of a person who is socially responsible, caring, and promoting of an equal society. | ***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 believe the foundational goal of promoting a successful classroom that incorporates all aspects of the AAR is to create a culture in the classroom that is respectful and safe. This would start the first day of school and how you, as a teacher, interact with the students and how you reinforce the actions of students with one another. It encourages building a classroom climate that sees differences as great opportunities to learn about things we cannot experience personally. It is about building a classroom that is excited to learn about everyone and understanding that being exposed to different things allows us to grow. Then, the next important tip I learned from the AAR is to make sure to explicitly explain to students the difference between the secular academic study of religion and the devotional study and help them understand we will be learning the secular academic way. This explanation should include students sharing their own experiences. For example, students could be asked to write a description of their favorite religious tradition or one that they are fascinated with. Then, you can collect those and use them to give examples of the two different ways to study religion. As a teacher, I feel it would be helpful if you explain to students the study of religion is like looking into a glass box. We are going to look as all the aspects of a religion that we can see, but we are not going to focus on how they make us feel or what we need to believe. We are focusing on the facts, not how to practice them.  |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |