***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***2002 Social Studies OACSGrade 6: People in Societies, Culture #2 Compare world religions and belief systems focusing on geographic origins, founding leaders and teachings including:a. Buddhism;b. Christianity;c. Judaism;d. Hinduism;e. IslamBuddhism1. Barrow, M. (n.d.). *World religions*. Retrieved from [http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework /religion/buddhism.htm](http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework%20/religion/buddhism.htm) (Teachers and Students)
2. Dokmai, N. (2007, February 20). *Life as a thai buddhist*. Retrieved from <http://www.thailandlife.com/thai-buddhist/life-as-a-thai-buddhist.html> (Student Literature)
3. *Religious education*. ( 26, October 2007). Retrieved from <http://www.icteachers.co.uk/resources/resources_re.htm> (Teachers)

Christianity1. Barrow, M. (2011). *World religions*. Retrieved from [http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/ religion/christian.htm](http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/%20religion/christian.htm) (Teachers and Students)
2. *Oracle think quest*. (2010, June). Retrieved from <http://library.thinkquest.org/28505/christianity/intro.htm> (Teachers)
3. *Christianity for children* . (25, June 2007). Retrieved from <http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/christianity/> (Students)

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3. *Judaism*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://library.thinkquest.org/28505/judaism/intro.htm

Hinduism1. Barrow, M. (n.d.). *World religions*. Retrieved from <http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/hinduism.htm> (Teachers and Students)
2. *Hinduism*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_hind.htm> (Teachers and Students)
3. *Hindu kids*. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.hindukids.org/> (Students)

Islam1. Barrow, M. (n.d.). *World religions*. Retrieved from <http://www.chiddingstone.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/Islam.htm> (Teachers and Students)
2. *Islam*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_isla.htm> (Teachers and Students)
3. *The five pillars of islam*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/re/fivepillars.htm> (Teachers)
 | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion*****Buddhism*** **Founder**: Siddhartha Gautama
* **Holy Book**: Tripitaka
* **Place of Worship**: Home and Temple
* **Followers**: Buddhists
* **Geography**: Originally: Northeastern India; Today: Asian Countries
* No sense of self or soul in this world
* The goal of one’s life is to break the cycles of death and birth and attain nirvana
* The way to nirvana involves the person showing love for others, being compassionate and sympathetic of other people, and showing patience in everything.
* Follow five main principles which prohibit killing, stealing, ill language, sexual immorality, and the use of toxic substances

**Christianity*** **Founder**: Jesus Christ, Son of God
* **Holy Book**: The Bible
* **Place of Worship**: Church
* **Followers**: Christians
* **Geography**: Originally: Middle East; Today: All over
* World’s biggest religion: 2.2 billion followers worldwide
* Christians believe that God made the world.
* Name derived from their leader - Jesus Christ- who was God's son. Christ is not Jesus' name but a Greek word meaning Messiah - God's chosen one.
* Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that: 1. God sent his Son to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins; 2. Jesus was fully human, and experienced this world in the same way as other human beings of his time; 3. Jesus was tortured and gave his life on the Cross (At the Crucifixion); 4. Jesus rose from the dead on
* Christians believe that there is only one God, but that this one God consists of 3 "persons": 1. God the Father; 2. God the Son; 3. The Holy Spirit
* 10 Commandments
* Originally part of Judaism but different because 1. Christianity came to regard Jesus as in some sense God's presence in human form, 2. There is one God and consists of 3 “persons”

**Judaism*** **Founder:** Abraham, the father of the Jewish people; Moses, the leader who freed Jews from slavery in Egypt
* **Holy Book**: Torah
* **Place of Worship**: Synagogues (men and women separate)
* **Followers**: Jews
* **Geography**: Originally: Middle East; Today: Largest populations in Israel and U.S.
* Oldest of the world's four biggest monotheistic religions (religions with only one god)
* Smallest main religion, with only about 12 million followers around the world.
* Makes up the cultural system of Jewish law, custom, and practice of the whole individual and community.

**Hinduism*** **Founder:** None; developed out of Brahminism
* **Holy Book:** Vedas
* **Place of Worship**: Shrine (Home), Mandir (Temple)
* **Followers:** Hindus
* **Geography**: Originally: Northern India, near the river Indus , Today: India (more than 80% of Indian population)
* **The world's third most popular religion with around 750 million followers**
* **The world’s oldest existing religion (4000 yrs old)**
* **Not a** not a single religion; the practices of a variety of different religious groups which come out of India
* Four goals in human life: 1. **Moksha** - the release of the soul (Atman) from the cycle of rebirth; 2. **Dharma** - the code for leading one's life; 3. **Artha** - the pursuit of material gain by lawful means; 4. **Karma**- through pure acts, knowledge and devotion, you can reincarnate to a higher level
* Believe in one God**, Brahman**, the eternal origin who is the cause and foundation of all existence
* Most Hindus have a personal god or godess such as Shiva, Krishna or Lakshmi to whom they pray regularly.

**Islam*** **Founder**: Series of prophets starting with Adam; Muhammad the most well known and last prophet sent by Allah
* **Holy Book**: Qur'an
* **Place of Worship**: Mosque
* **Followers**: Muslims
* **Geography**: Originally: Saudi Arabia , Today: Middle East, Asia, and the north of Africa
* Second most popular religion in the world with over a thousand million followers
* Allah is the name Muslims use for the supreme and unique God, who created and rules everything. The heart of faith for all Muslims is obedience to Allah's will.
* 6 Main Beliefs: 1. Belief in Allah; 2. Belief in angels; 3. Belief in the holy books; 4. Belief in the Prophets; 5. Belief in the Day of Judgment; 6. Belief in Predestination
* Muslims are required to: 1. pray five times a day (prayer times are fixed by the sun and change daily); 2. wash themselves before prayer; 3. face in the direction of Mecca (Mekkah) while praying
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| ***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***1. Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.
* Have teachers and students explore assumptions they harbor about religion generally and religious traditions in particular.
* Teachers need to foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty by encouraging students to 1) 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”; 2) examine how their judgments may impact others; and 3) explore ideas and ask questions without fear.
1. Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.
* The school’s approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.
* Foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty.
1. Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.
* Articulating the distinction between religious studies and a devotional approach to religion at the outset of a lesson or unit will clarify educational goals and minimize confusion and anxiety.
* Seeing 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.
 | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***1. Start a unit on a new religion by doing something similar to a Topic Web or a KWL. Students can talk about what they already think they know as a truth about a certain belief system. This is a good way to explore assumptions they harbor about religion generally and religious traditions in particular.
2. By consistently watching wording to ensure that the teaching stays academic instead of devotional I would be able to better control the conversation in my classroom. By using words such as “it is believed” instead of “it is true that” will aid in this process.

I will also make sure to set clear guidelines upfront to establish a respectful and open learning environment within my classroom. There will be very specific consequences for not adhering to expectations.1. By continually reminding students about the fairness and sameness to which I am choosing to approach the teaching of each religion will help students try to be fairer in their approach to learning about religion.

By representing different religions from multiple angles, I hope to be able to convey to students that every religion has its positive and negative aspects depending on who is looking at the religion from what point in time. I also want students to understand that there is no single meaning of a given belief system. I hope to do this by having students do creative writing pieces from the perspective of different individuals. |
| ***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?***Maybe I am trying to be too much of an idealist but I would like to say that I would a mix of three of the teaching strategies listed: the historical approach, the literary approach, and the cultural studies approach. This is what I like about each of the strategies and would want to include in my instructional practices:**Historical Approach**: This approach begins with the "origins of a religion and its development are presented in historical context with the political and cultural influences represented as central to understanding how that religion emerged, gained followers, and spread." This is a very basic way at looking at religion and provides a good starting point.**Literary Approach**: In this approach I appreciate that "teachers help students gain an appreciation of the way that religion infuses all aspects of culture by seeing how religious allusion and metaphor can become a common language that is shared by a people." I also like the idea of having students being exposed to firsthand accounts from a religious perspective. I think it teaches appreciation for diversity and critical thinking skills.**Cultural Studies Approach**: This approach is attractive to me because of the critical thinking skills required for students to fully understand the "emphasis on recognizing the ways that religion is embedded in culture and cannot be understood in isolation from its particular social/historical expressions." This makes religion a REAL thing, something that is still ALIVE today and very much a part of how the world works, especially on a community level. This approach would have to be used with caution and would probably work only with the higher leveled students (4-5th grade may be too young to properly understand the reasoning behind this approach).***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***The main concern with teaching world religions in an academic/school setting is to keep the emphasis on teaching in an academic fashion, not a devotional fashion. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching religion in the public school setting is making sure all of the students are on the same page by setting the context by helping the students understand that learning about religion is a legal and appropriate undertaking for public schools, and 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. Although there are many different methods for teaching world religion, the way you decide to teach it is based on your personal comfort level with the concepts and the level/type of students.  | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***1. **Historical Approach**

I will begin the unit on each religion by establishing where the religion originated from and where it thrives today. This will set up the historical basis for the religious students and establish a connection with the students so the material will be considered more relevant.I will then talk about the popularity of the religion and how it gained followers. The why is often important to students and makes them feel more like equals because you are taking the time to explain the details.1. **Literary Approach**

While teaching about the different religions I think it is important for students to be able to read personal accounts about certain belief systems. This allows students to apply critical thinking skills while personally connecting to an individual who is a follower of a particular religion, especially if I can find a teenager’s or another young person’s account of what it is like to spend a day as a worshipper of a certain religion. It allows students to gain perspective about other cultures and their idea of everyday living. By doing writing activities in which students have to put themselves in the shoes of another, I think students would really become close to the subject matter. Simple role playing can help a student make a lasting connection with the material and make it more memorable and REAL. 1. **Cultural Studies Approach**

By presenting each religion in a cultural context, I hope students will be able to see a more holistic picture of religion. When teaching this, I will compare religion to the way that race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality so that they can realize that as these qualities are always factors in cultural interpretation and understanding, so is religion.In this approach, I would also attempt to approach the idea of politics on a very basic level to explain to students how dynamic and far reaching religion can be. Talking about voting, especially with a big election coming up could spark an interest with some students and get them thinking about the many factors that affect a person’s reasoning and decision making. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection******10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***I really enjoyed reading through the document because it touched on a lot of elements that I always wondered about when teaching social studies, especially because of how much cross curricular work can be done with any number of topics. One of the main aspects that I liked about the document was the stress it put on keeping the teaching academic and thought provoking while preventing conversation from becoming heated at the same time. I think the critical thinking that is being promoted by many of the teaching methods and embedded in the third competency listed above is wonderful. Students need to learn how and why people live as they do and what their driving forces might be. To get students to appreciate these differences is to give them the key to success in our ever-expanding world today. | ***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 plan to do many different things to take the information I have gained and make is comprehensible to my sixth graders. One of the first things I want them to do is take responsibility for their own learning/thinking. I hope to do this by getting them critically thinking about who they are and what they know/don’t know/think they know. By talking about assumptions they harbor about religion generally and religious traditions in particular I think they will really open up to learning what I want to teach.One teaching idea that I really loved because it coincides with a few activities I have had students do in the past is the following snapshot given in the article: Ms. M.’s sixth-grade class is exploring the art of storytelling. She has students write a series of their own stories interspersed with selections of stories from a diverse array of cultures and traditions. In one section, she focuses on how ancient stories are often retold with contemporary significance and chooses selections from *Because God Loves Stories: An Anthology of Jewish Storytelling*33 as one example of this common literary practice. I really like to use a combination of role playing and critical thinking to get students engaged in a topic. Presenting them with facts is boring and traditional but making them create something new while keeping true to the facts they have been given can produce wonderful, lasting results.  |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |