***ALICIA BIRKMIRE***

***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***  Please see the following pages down below. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion.***  When it comes to the Buddhist religion, it is a religion derived from teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who guided the many beliefs and traditions. One of the main beliefs of the religion is the belief in Karma. Karma is believed to be how a person is rewarded or punished in life, depending on their actions. In other words, “what goes around, comes around”, is a saying that would describe Karma. Another belief in the Buddhist religion is of the Four Noble Truths. These four truths are considered to be the principles of Buddha’s teachings. These truths revolve around human suffering through society, and offer a plan for people dealing with their sufferings.  When it comes to the Hinduism religion, it can be defined as a diverse body of religion, philosophy and cultural practice. The Hindu people believe in reincarnation, which is when people return to earth as something/someone other than who they were in the previous life. They do not follow one God, but are similar to the Buddhist religion in the sense that they believe in the force called Karma, and Karma decides their reincarnation “fate”.  When it comes to the Islam religion, it can be defined as the religion that follows the beliefs of the Prophet Muhammad. People following this religion are also known as Muslims. Unlike the Hindu religion, Muslims believe in one God they call Allah. The Sunnah (their form of a “Bible”) is that describes their “Five Pillars” of belief, which include: believing in Allah, praying five times a day, giving charity to the poor, making a trip to Mecca sometime in your life, and fasting during Ramadan.  When it comes to the Christianity religion, the people believe in one God, as well as creation. They believe God created the universe, animals, people, etc., and they believe that one day he will return and only take his believers to Heaven. Heaven is considered to be the “Utopia” of the Christian faith, where everything is perfect and holy. Christians read their biblical stories and beliefs from the Holy Bible, and celebrate holidays such as Christmas that represent the birth of God’s son, Jesus Christ. Christians believe that if you do not believe/accept Christ as your savior, you will not be saved and you will be sent to Hell when you die.  When it comes to the Judaism religion, it is described as the Jewish people believing there is only one God with whom they have a “covenant”. A covenant is an agreement in this case they keep God’s law and seek to bring holiness to their lives, while God keeps the agreement to do good deeds upon his people. An example of a holiday/tradition is the Sabbath meal. This is when families come together to welcome the “holy day”. |
| ***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***   * ***Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.*** * Page 12: Students can complete a short writing assignment where they discuss any key words/concepts about beliefs or traditions for different religions. With this writing, students will find “main ideas” amongst their own writing and be able to discuss and focus on expanding those thoughts. * Page 12: Foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty-   + move away from generalizations   + examine how their judgments impact others   + explore ideas and ask questions without fear * ***Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.*** * Page 13: Ms. X provides a great example of best practice when teaching religion/traditions of Native American tribes. It neither promotes/encourages students to believe in anything specific, but educates them about a broad spectrum of beliefs.   + oral storytelling unit   + reads a story each day discussing a different Native American Tribe   + Students complete a drawing reflection   + At the end of the unit, students get to take their favorite story/drawing home to share with their families * Page 13: Mr. J creates a unit on biblical stories. Allow students to be creative and inventive, instead of feeling “persuaded” to believe in the religions/allusions discussed.   + Gives students a selection of biblical-themed cartoons from the *New Yorker*   + Students identify in writing the characters they recognized   + students realize they don’t know very many   + Student look at Emily Dickinson’s poem and discuss allusions that are biblical   + Students create a PowerPoint discussing the short synopsis of the story from the KJB, and representation of the story in art form * ***Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.*** * Page 19: Have the appropriate attitude and posture   + teachers should not discourage students’ free expression of their religious beliefs or ideas   + teachers should present religion content in the context of the approved curriculum   + the religious beliefs of the teachers should not determine the teacher teaching about other religions in his/her classroom. * Page 7: Teachers should follow the guidelines for teaching about religions   + school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional   + strive for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any religion   + school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion | ***How can you incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency.***   * ***Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.***   I could incorporate this competency into my teaching of world religions by conducting a “quick-write”, or “quick-draw”. Students will have a few minutes to write or draw anything they know about a specific religion (whatever one we’re talking about that day). Students can then use their quick-write/draws and work in groups to discuss comparisons/differences, key ideas that stick out, etc. With this, their discussions are guided, serve a purpose, are educating them through others’ writings/drawings that may have something included that wasn’t on their own writing/drawing, and stay away from personal beliefs, and rely on facts.   * ***Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.***   I could incorporate this competency into my teaching of world religions by creating lessons/units that offer a variety of teaching styles that will foster students’ awareness of religions and not their acceptance of other religions. Lessons that allow students to discover the history, facts, monuments, etc., that revolve around that religion are geared more towards best practices in teaching religion, than a lesson where students just discuss their own beliefs. I could research multiple teaching strategies and observe video clips where teachers have successfully implementing teaching of religions in their classrooms. Through lessons such as oral storytelling, Biblical comic drawings, historical timelines, etc., I would be able to provide the best practices in teaching religions to the class.     * ***Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.***   I could incorporate this competency into my teaching of world religions by remaining “an outsider” when discussing the religions. I would make sure my comments were geared towards making students aware of different religions, and not geared towards making them accept a specific religion. I would also make sure that my projects/PBL was set up to remain neutral and not favored of a certain religion. If I follow those guidelines, all of my students should feel accepted and in a safe learning environment. |
| ***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’d use the Historical Approach because I really like the idea of students researching the origin of the religion and the historical development in various cultures. I like how I could discuss/create timelines of the religions and how they developed through various cultures and societies. Students could research cultures trade/cultural norms and determine the influences they played on the religion and how it evolved/developed as time went on. Students could also discuss how different religions derived from other religions and compare in specific ways.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***   * *Understand the difference between the secular academic and devotional approaches to religion, and consistently use the secular academic approach.*    + I understand that the difference between the secular academic and devotional approaches to religion is that secular academic is where the teacher is teaching to make the students aware of the various religions; and the devotional approaches are to help students develop an understanding, and accept a specific religion. * *Be able to address in a constructive way religious disagreements and conflicts that arise in the classroom.*    + This competency is where the teacher determines the best way to handle the religious disagreements and conflicts that arise in the classroom. For example, some students may believe in evolution whereas other students believe is creation. If a conflict would arise, the teacher needs to determine how to handle the situation so neither group feels “threatened” or “put down” about their beliefs, but instead, both groups learn to research/become aware of each group’s beliefs. * *Be aware of, and manage effectively, religious diversity in the classroom.*   + The teacher needs to be knowledgeable and educated about the various cultural practices and religions his/her students may have. For example, a teacher might have a group of Christian students, but also a handful of Muslim students. The teachers need to be aware of the different religious backgrounds “in their classroom” and possibly “embrace” them by studying them and having students share with one another what their traditions are and POSSIBLY create projects around those religions. It makes everyone feel welcomed and in a safe environment. * *Create an environment of respect and tolerance—a safe environment in which students feel free to talk about religion.*   + I think this means that the teacher needs to make sure students are educated about each other’s backgrounds/beliefs, to create a welcoming environment for all. I also think that if students are allowed to provide their own input about their religion into discussions that relate, then it makes the student feel accepted and “equal” with one another. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  I will remain professional in all discussions of the various religions. If I have different religions represented through my various students, I will make sure to respect each of those religions. For example, if I wanted to create Christmas projects in class, I could find a different project for each of the religions in our class, have students research the meaning behind each of the projects, and then choose which project they’d like to make for the holidays. If students start arguments and disagreements about each other’s religions, I will remain a “third person party” where my opinions are kept to myself, but my comments are constructive and making students aware of each of the religion’s point of views/beliefs. I feel that integrating language arts into the classroom setting is necessary when it comes to research/learning about religions through literature; but, I also feel the historical components of religion are necessary to educate the students about, which should result in their understanding of opinions/beliefs different from their own. I think having students conduct historical research about how the different religions derived, and “who” or “what” is the “leader” of different religions would be a great way to introduce the various types of religions and how they compare/contrast to others. Creating timelines, PowerPoint presentations, filmed interviews, writing narratives, creating art projects, around the historical aspect of each of the religions would be good ways to keep the “present day” opinions out of the conversation, and keep students on the historical aspect of HOW and WHY the different religions came to be. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  I liked how the AAR document not only described the guidelines of teaching religion to the students, but also provided snapshots and examples of teaching styles that are appropriate and demonstrate best practices in teaching religion. I think the AAR document allowed me to step back and look at my own beliefs, reflect on the diversity in students at my school, and realize that they too have a religion they feel is important. Although I don’t believe in their religion, as a teacher I need to respect their choices and beliefs, and make they don’t feel threatened or unaccepted in my classroom. The document allowed me to understand the different approaches to teaching religion, and helped me gain insight to my comfort level in teaching religion in my classroom. I decided that the historical approach is more my “cup of tea” when it comes to teaching religion. I love the way I could incorporate social studies and literature together, yet remain on the historical end of each of the religions. I can have students create timelines and learn about how the religions came to be and developed over time. I also feel the AAR document lent a hand in supplying me with some important competencies on how to remain professional when teaching religion, and how to keep my own beliefs and opinions to myself, making students AWARE and not ACCEPT the different religions. | ***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.***  In order to make the information from the AAR document and research comprehensible to my 6th graders, I’ve decided that my “snapshot” will revolve around the idea of creating artistic timelines. I would have students read different short stories about the various religions, and create timelines with visual depicting the main events of the development of the religions over time. Students could be in small groups so each group was in charge of a different religion. Having each group create an artistic timeline would allow students to present their projects to one another and compare the different religions. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |

**STATION 1:**

***Standard/s***

Grade 6>> Geography >> Human Systems

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:**

**1.** PBS. (n.d.). *Basics of Buddhism*. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm

**Annotation:** This great webpage is straight and to the point. It provides a detailed, yet specific page of the important information on Buddhism. It’s a kid-friendly website and easy to navigate. The webpage discusses the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Guatama, who later became known as the Buddha. It also discusses the four Nobel Truths, the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering. This Nobel Truths are a plan that assists the Buddhist people in dealing with the sufferings humanity has. There is more information on specific beliefs in Buddhism, so check the page out and read on!

**2.** Kadampa Buddhism. (2007). *About Buddhism*. Retrieved from http://www.aboutbuddhism.org/

**Annotation:** This web page is incredible!! The homepage is a quick glimpse at Buddhism, but off to the right there are various links to click on to offer many details on Buddhism. The links are, What is Buddhism, History of Buddhism, Buddhism Beliefs, Buddhism Today, Books on Buddhism, Buddhist News, Buddhist Sites, etc. When you click on the link it opens a page that contains detailed information on just that specific topic. For example, I clicked on “Buddhism Beliefs” and learned that they believe in a cycle of death and rebirth, where they have no choice of what they come back as, and they call it ‘cyclic existence’, or ‘samsara’ in Sanskrit.

**3.** Winston, D. (2003). *Wide Awake: A Buddhist guide for teens*. New York, New York: The Berkley Publishing Group.

**Annotation:** This book is great for younger teens that need some information on Buddhism. Although the book is lengthy and has multiple chapters, the chapters are broken up into parts “Starting Our Journey”, “Learning to Meditate”, “Surfacing Our Inner Goodness”, “How Do We Live Our Lives”, and “Out In The World”. Each of the parts contain 3-6 chapters that hit more detailed components of the topic. This would be a neat book to use when integrating reading in the social studies classroom, breaking students into small groups to create projects on the different parts/topics.

**Christianity:**

**1.** GoogleSites. (n.d.). *World Religions For Kids*. Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/christianity

**Annotation:** This is a great website that is easy for kids to read and follow along. There are many visuals and even a movie clip. The webpage discusses the beliefs of Christianity and how Christianity developed from Judaism. The webpage also discusses how Christians worship their God in church and follow the stories and scripture of a book called the Bible.

**2.** Burpo, T. (2010). *Heaven Is For Real*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**Annotation:** This book is incredible for younger teens! Although it’s not a factual book about Hinduism, it is about a young boy that has life-saving surgery, and during the surgery he believes he went to heaven. He describes angels, and Jesus, and Heaven to his parents, who are shocked that he knew that many details for never having read the entire Bible, as well as details that aren’t mentioned in the Bible. This story of a young boy and his parents offers insight to the Christianity beliefs, views, and practices. It’s a great book and a lot of young teens (even adults) would really enjoy it!

**3.** Jenkins, J. (1998). *The Vanishings (Left Behind: The Kids #1).*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado. Tyndale House Publishers.*

**Annotation:** This great book is a young adolescent book that comes in a series. This first book discusses what Christians believe to be as “Christ’s return”, when he comes back to earth and takes his followers and believers to Heaven, leaving behind the doubters to suffer as earth comes to an end. Although the adult versions of the books are more detailed, in-depth, and offer more insight into connections with the Bible, this book (and series) offers some information that young readers can learn about the Christian beliefs and values.

**Hinduism:**

**1.** GoogleSites. (n.d.). *World Religions For Kids*. Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/home/hinduism

**Annotation:** Starting out with a movie clip, as well as detailed information and pictures, students learn that Hindus believe that God is all things in the world, differing from the Christianity perspective of one God “in the sky”. They believe in Karma, and however you behave on earth determines what you come back as after reincarnation. There’s a lot more information on this page so check it out!

**2.** Barnes, T. (2005). *Hinduism and Other Eastern Religions*.

Boston, Massachusetts : Houghton Mifflin Company.

**Annotation:** This book is more of a book with factual information and not a story-line. It discusses other religions besides Hinduism, but offers information regarding the origin of the religion, key elements of the belief system, and the appeal the religion has on the west. This book is great with many pictures and small facts listed around the pages and the paragraphs of information. Great book to compare to other languages such as, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism, as those three religions are also discussed in the book.

**3.** Wallace, H. (2013). *Hinduism: Babu's Story (Our World Faith)*. Newforest Press.

**Annotation:** This book is part of a series of books, each filled when a variety of children’s stories on their religions. This book in particular discusses Babu’s story on Hinduism and how she feels about her beliefs, values, and cultural lifestyle. The book goes into details on the beliefs, special foods and clothes, method and place of worship, holy books, festivals and important occasions, and holy places of the Hindu religion.

**Islam:**

**1.** GoogleSites. (n.d.). *World Religions For Kids*. Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/islam

**Annotation:** With the many visuals and movie clip, students will learn a lot of information about the Islamic religion in regards to their holy book, Koran, and prophet, Muhammad. I also like how the webpage goes into detail about how they worship in a Mosque. Great website with great details!

**2.** Barnard, B. (2011). *The Genius of Islam: How Muslims Made The Modern World* . New York: Random House Children's Books.

**Annotation:** Bryn Barnard offers A LOT of pictures to illustrate the contributions the Islam have brought to life. While digging deeper into their beliefs, values, cultural lifestyles, etc., Barnard provides information to the readers about the cultural and scientific advancement in the Islamic Empire in the middle ages. This book does not exactly lay out the facts of the Islamic religion, but instead offers details of their lifestyle giving descriptions and connections to the religion.

**3.** Emerick, Y. (2010). What Islam Is All About.

**Annotation:** This book is a textbook that’s typically used in Muslim schools, Sunday school classes, etc. It describes the Islamic point of view and way of life, providing an abundance of information in a plethora of topics. For example, there is an entire chapter dedicated to discussing the history of the Prophet Muhammad, but also contains chapters discussing other prophets. This book is very long but contains an ENORMOUS amount of information!

**Judaism:**

**1.** GoogleSites. (n.d.). *World Religions For Kids*. Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/judaism

**Annotation:** This website is kid friendly and provides a lot of great information on Judaism that’s easy for kids to understand. Through the many pictures and movie clip, the students will have plenty of visual aids to help comprehend the text. For example, it discusses how the Judaist people use the word Yahweh for God, and worship in synagogues. Next to this information is a picture of an actual synagogue making it easy for kids to make the connection.

**2.** Telushkin, J. (2000). *The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-by-Day Guide To Ethical Living*. New York, New York: Bell Tower.

**Annotation:** Rabbi Joseph Telushkin wrote this book with details taken from the Bible, Talmud, and a spectrum of Judaism’s sacred writings. This book was written to provide readers with a daily guide to lead a civilized, caring and honest life. Although some topics are not suited for children (picking a spouse, etc.), there are some chapters that would benefit the teacher and students in learning about the Judaism beliefs, such as what they are allowed to purchase, when (if at all) it’s appropriate to lie, etc. Most chapters revolve around becoming a better person, but teachers and students can easily pick and choose a couple chapters to read and connect them to the more details resources of the Judaist beliefs.

**3.**  (2003). *Dk Eyewitness Books: Judaism*. DK Publishing.

**Annotation:** This book is great when looking for a quick and easy way to research the facts about Judaism. Readers will find information regarding the history, faith and culture. There are A LOT of pictures that provide visuals, and little “snip-its” of information connecting to the pictures. Great informational book!