***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***  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). | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion*** |
| ***Buddhism:***  BuddhaNet.net. (1996-2012). Buddhist Studies. Retrieved from www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/index.htm  *This website has a lot of different features and aspects that make it a great resource for anyone interested in Buddhist studies. The website takes it from basic to secondary understanding and includes information on the scriptures and teachings.*  The Clear Vision Trust. (2009). Students 12-14. ClearVision Audio-visual resources exploring Buddhism. Retrieved from www.clear-vision.org/Schools/Students/Ages-12-14.aspx  *This site is very straightforward and is geared towards different age groups. The link to the 12-14 year old students provides the basics in a way that students at this age level can understand and think critically about. There is also an option on the website to ask questions and a real person will get back to you with an answer. Very user friendly site.*  PBS. (2013). Buddhism: An Introduction. Retrieved from www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm  *This site tells the basics of Buddhism. Though it doesn’t offer an option to ask questions, it has most the basic information. This website is user friendly and has very good information. I used this website to get the very basic facts about Buddhism.* | ***Buddhism:***   * The founder of Buddhism was Siddhartha Gautuama. * Gautuama wandered into world in search of understanding. * Comprised of Four Noble Truths.   1. Identifies presence of suffering   2. Seeks to determine cause of suffering   3. The truth of the end of suffering   4. Charts method for attaining the end of suffering * Karma within Buddhism refers to good or bad actions a person takes during his/her lifetime. * Karma plays out in the cycle of rebirth. There are six separate planes into which living can be reborn. Three fortunate, three unfortunate. * The realm of man is considered the highest realm of rebirth. Also the realm of man is the only plane to offer Nirvana. |
| ***Christianity:***  BBC. (2013). Religions: Christianity. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/  *This website is great because it gives a lot of different options and places to search. It separates the different aspects of a religion, in this case, Christianity, and allows people to either navigate through the entire website or find the topic they are looking for.*  Miller, S. M. (2006). Who’s Who and Where’s Where in the Bible for Kids. Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, Inc.  *This is a book that has a focus on children. It makes learning and searching through the bible easier and quicker. The kids can read the book in a fun, leisurely way and still be learning about the important people and places in the Christian Bible.*  Rainbox, C. Christianity for Children. Retrieved from atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carolrb/Christianity/index.html  *This website is much more focused on children. It has the text and language in a much younger readability level. This site also includes links on the left hand side that open up to more focused information so kids don’t have to search the whole website if they only want a small piece of information.* | ***Christianity:***   * World biggest religion, with about 2.1 billion followers worldwide. * Based on teachings of Jesus Christ who lived in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago. * Believe that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. * Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he was sent to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins. * Important concept is of Jesus giving his life on the Cross and rising from the dead on the third day. * Believe there is only one God, but three elements to this one God:   1. God the Father   2. God the Son   3. The Holy Spirit * Christian holy book is the Bible and has the Old and New Testaments. |
| ***Hinduism:***  BBC. (2013). Religions: Hinduism. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/  *This website is great and very user friendly because it gives a lot of different options and places to search. It separates the different aspects of a religion, in this case, Hinduism, and allows people to either navigate through the entire website or find the topic they are looking for. The information is clear and accurate and also has links that take you outside of the website if some information isn’t there.*  Hindu Kids Universe. Retrieved from www.hindukids.org  *Though this website is cute and fun, it is a little more difficult to find information on the sponsoring organization. But for children, this website is fun and interactive. It has a lot of pictures and places for not only kids, but for parents and even a place to shop for items relating to the religion. It is fun to look at and fun to play around with while also providing information.*  Hinduismfacts.org. (2011). Hinduism Facts. Retrieved from hinduismfacts.org  *This website is very straightforward. It has basic facts about the religion and also addresses some of the misconceptions about Hinduism which I think is great. There is also a fast-fact section where it is in bullets and students could just look for the information they want rather than reading paragraph after paragraph to find one piece. Very good and accurate* | ***Hinduism:***   * Religion of the majority of people in India and Nepal. * Oldest living religion. * No one single founder, scripture, or agreed set of teachings. It has an extensive history with different key figures, philosophies, and holy books. * Most Hindus use sacred scripture known as Veda and draw on a common system of values known as dharma. * Most believe in a Supreme God, whose qualities and forms are drawn from various deities * Believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, governed by Karma. |
| ***Islam:***  Al-Islam. (2000-2010). Discover Islam. Retrieved from www.al-islam.org/index.php?sid=889118124&t=80&cat=80  *This website is not as user friendly as some of the others I have posted but it is full of information. It is an Islam library so there are articles and pieces of text all about Islam as a culture, its traditions, and facts about the religion. The website has many opportunities to link off of the direct website if you aren’t finding what you want. There are also other ways to search, go through quick links, and look at projects. Very good and very informational.*  IslamReligion. (2013). The Religion of Islam. Retrieved from www.islamreligion.com  *This website was very cool and very fun to look around. The website is well run and updated on a weekly basis with new feature articles, videos and there is even an option to live chat. There is a bar on the left side that has data about what the articles are about and what kind of information can be found as well as for videos.*  Khan, R. (2002). Muslim Child: Understanding Islam Through Stories and Poems. Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company.  *This book is focused for the Muslim Child and it provides students a fun and interactive way to learn about the religion. When students are reading stories and poems they may not be as aware that they are learning information, instead they think they are just having fun reading in a different way but the stories and poems all relate to the religion and how a child perceives it.* | ***Islam:***   * Muslims believe in one, incomparable God. He has no son or partner. * Muslims believe in Angels as honored creatures. * Believe that God revealed his books to His messengers as proof for mankind as guidance for them. Among these books is the Quran. * Believe in the prophets and messengers of God. * Believe in the Day of Judgment when all people will be resurrected for God’s judgment according to their beliefs and deeds. * Believe in Al-Qadar, which is Divine Predestination. Which does not mean human beings do not have freewill, but that Muslims believe that God has given human beings freewill. * Muslims believe in five prayers. |
| ***Judaism:***  NSW Board of Jewish Education. (2012). Judaism Pages for Kids. Retrieved from www.bje.org.au/learning/judaism/kids/  *This website has its main focus on children! It tells of the various aspects of Judaism and provides a Table of Contents section that tells where everything is. There is a separate site for Students and Parents to search and one great thing is that there are different spots to look for News and Events, and Learning Resources so this website can be used for many different things.*  Rich, T. (1995-2011). Welcome to Judaism 101. Retrieved from www.jewfaq.org/index.shtml  *This website is very basic and tells the information in a basic paragraph format. The person who created the website describes it as an online encyclopedia of Judaism honing information such as Jewish beliefs, people, places, scripture, practices, customs, holidays, and other information so that anyone can get the viewpoint of the Orthodox Jew. There are many sites linking up to this website and it is very user friendly.*  URI. (2002). Judaism: Background, Basic Beliefs and Sacred Texts. Retrieved from www.uri.org/kids/world\_juda\_basi.htm  *This website is not huge, but it is great for children because it doesn’t have too much extra information that the kids aren’t looking for. It answers the basic questions (i.e. How did Judaism begin? What are the sacred texts? Etc.) in a quick, easy, and readable way for children. It also tells the information simply and provides resources for other religions and within this religion.* | ***Judaism:***   * Began about 4000 years ago with Hebrew people in the Middle East. Abraham is considered the father of Jewish faith. * Believe there is one God. * Abraham had a son Isaac. He had a son Jacob, also called Israel. The descendents of Abraham are called Israelites. God promised he would care for them as long as they obeyed God’s laws. * At Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the Law which would guide the Israelites to today. Laws were Ten Commandments and form the basis of the Torah, the book of Jewish law. * Three basic groups of Jewish people who have a different understanding of the interpretation of the Torah.   1. Orthodox Jews- believe all the practices in the Torah which it is practical to obey must be obeyed without question.   2. Conservative and Reform Jews believe that ancient laws and practices have to be interpreted for modern life.   3. Reform Jews allow everyone to sit together, men and women, and both Hebrew and local language are spoken in service. |
| ***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.   * The Cultural Studies Approach provides tools to recognize and analyze the various aspects of all knowledge. * It is important to make the classroom a place where students are tolerant, honest, and can respect other students and what they believe. | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***  One way to incorporate this in a social studies classroom is to first make sure I am trained and competent in facts about the various religions. Second, we could do a carousel activity where the different religions are posted in a different spot in the room and in small groups; the students go around to each religion and write what they know about each religion. If they aren’t sure if it is fact or rumor, they could put a question mark next to it. Then they move to the next religion. If a group before them wrote something that they aren’t sure is fact, they can put a question mark on it. |
| Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.   * The first challenge that teachers and students need to work on is to acknowledge and work around the assumptions that they harbor about religion and religious traditions. This is best practices because it is reflective. * By providing students the opportunity to brainstorm what they know or think they know about religions, they have the opportunity to be collaborative and expressive in their learning. | After doing the carousel activity where students go around the classroom and write what they know, as a class we could go through the posters of the various religions and reflect on what we know is true, find answers on what we aren’t positive about, and add facts. This gives students the opportunities to research new facts, and to discuss some of the aspects that they weren’t sure of or didn’t know a certain tradition of a religion. |
| Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.   * Teachers should move away from making generalizations toward more basic statements. Independent of whatever religion the teacher practices, they should take a step back and answer academically rather than personally. * By helping students to understand that there are many different types of religions (i.e. many different Islams, Judaisms, Christianities, etc.) helps the students to consider that basic questions such as “What does this religion believe…” is not specific enough. | For this competency, I believe it would be important for students to try to step in a person who practices a different religion’s shoes. For example, the students are all given different scenarios and the students have to research that scenario. So one student could be a Lutheran Christian in Ohio, another who is a Protestant from Texas, another a person who practices Judaism from Israel, another who practices Judaism from New York City, etc. Each student could do research about what their person would do and how their religion would affect their lives. Students could present it to the rest of their classmates. |
| ***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?***  Ideally, I would like to use the Cultural Studies Approach. This approach seems to include the beneficial aspects of the other approaches. In this approach, students are given the opportunity to recognize that religion is part of human experiences. While using this approach, teachers would need to be trained on the various religions and it would take more time to go deeper in to the content. I do believe it would be beneficial because the other approaches would still be used but in a more positive and helpful way. Students can still see what happened in history and how religion emerged from the past. It would still be extremely beneficial to use novels and have students relate to literature while learning about religion. And though textbooks don’t dig very deep, the students would still have access to some information that could be a starting point to do more research.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  The different competencies in Station 3 come down to understanding differences and respecting those differences in the classroom. The first competency touches on understanding that there is a difference in teaching religion from personal or simply devotional approaches and teaching in an academic way. With that, the next competency deals with answering questions and settling disagreements that could happen between students in the classroom. Again, this would need to be done with respect and in an academic way. The final two competencies work with the diversity in the classroom and making sure that students feel safe and respected in the classroom environment. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***   1. One way I could implement the Cultural Studies Approach in the classroom is to do what I mentioned in Station 2. I would like to have students take on a persona from someone of a religion that we are studying. Have the students all have something a little different and have students do some research on that religion and what it might look like for that person in the location that they are from. This would allow students to learn and help students to recognize some of the differences. The students would be interpreting what their person would live like and see how their religion might affect their everyday lives. This would also put the teacher in a position where they will be assisting students who are learning of all different religions and allow the teaching to be strictly academic. 2. Another way I could implement this approach in the classroom is to look at religion from a different way. One of the Snapshots from the reading was very interesting and focused on a different concept then how the religion itself differs. The concept was to look at Buddhism, or any religion for that matter, through the differences in architecture. The teacher would show the students different temples and places of worship from around the world and throughout time and students would be able to see and discuss what changed and why. The students could take the discussion through migration and immigration waves, and amounts of people in the religion in that area, and how the people from the different areas used the places of worship in different ways. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development and pedagogy?***  I’m honestly not sure I thought much about teaching religion before these guidelines. So I can’t say whether I was apprehensive about it or felt okay about it but I can say for sure that if I do end up teaching a 6th grade Social Studies classroom someday, this is something I could do and would have a lot of fun doing. I believe it is a great opportunity to clear up students assumptions and to provide the students with a good, positive foundation when thinking about people of different cultures and 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.***  For this snapshot, I would like to bring in literature. One thing I found while researching through the different religions are either poems or lullaby-like books about each religion. In class, the students could hear and read each of the different examples from different religions and see how the nighttime stories differ and how they are the same. This would provide students a look in to what parents are teaching and reading to their kids from the various religions.  EX:  Nagaraja, D. (2008). Buddha at Bedtime. London, England: Duncan Baird Publishers.  Card, M. (2003). Sleep Sound in Jesus: Gentle Lullabies for Little Ones and Inspirational Devotions for Parents. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers.  Somaiah, R. Somaiah, R. (2006). Indian Children’s Favourite Stories. North Clarendon, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing.  Elias, M.A.H., Saad, M. M. (2010). Children’s Islamic Bedtime Stories. Electronic Dawah Institute  Groner, J., Wikler, M. (1993). Thank you, God! A Jewish Child’s Book of Prayer. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Kar-Ben Publishing. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |