***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***4. Compare the geographic, political, economic and social characteristics of the river civilizations in the Tigris and Euphrates (Mesopotamia), Nile (Egypt), Huang Ho and Indus valleys before 1000 B.C. including:a. Location;b. Government;c. Religion;d. Agriculture;e. Cultural and scientific contributions5. Describe the characteristics of Maya, Inca, Aztec and Mississippian civilizations including:a. Location;b. Government;c. Religion;d. Agriculture;e. Cultural and scientific contributions2. Compare world religions and belief systems focusing on geographic origins, founding leaders and teachings including:a. Buddhism;b. Christianity;c. Judaism;d. Hinduism;e. Islam.*Interaction* 3. Explain factors that foster conflict or cooperation among countries:a. Language;b. Religion;c. Types of government;d. Historic relationships;e. Economic interests.Buddhism:* <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/buddhism.htm>
	+ This website gives basic information about Buddhism and answers questions about the religion.
* <http://www.buddhanet.net/gallery.htm>
	+ This website allows students to explore the importance of Buddhist architecture and art.
* Koja, Kathe. *Buddha Boy*. New York: Speak, 2004. Print.
	+ In this book, Justin is paired with a Buddhist boy named Jinsen for a school project. The kids make fun of Jinsen for his “weird” beliefs. As Justin and Jinsen spend more time together, Justin begins to become curious about Jinsen’s beliefs and finds out about his amazing artistic ability.

Hinduism:* <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/hinduism.htm>
	+ This website gives basic information about Hinduism and answers questions about the religion.
* <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/meeting_god/temple/index.html>
	+ This website talks about Hindi temples and their importance.
* Johari, Harish, Vatsala Sperling, and Pieter Weltevrede. *How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head*. Rochester, VT: Bear Cub, 2003. Print.
	+ This is a traditional Hindu tale that talks about the origin of Ganesh, a Hindu god.

Islam: * <http://www.hitchams.suffolk.sch.uk/mosque/default.htm>
	+ This website lets you virtually explore a mosque.
* <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/Islam.htm>
	+ This website gives basic information about Islam and answers questions about the religion.
* <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/islam/religion/>
	+ This website talks about the religion as well as shows a video of Muslims singing a prayer song.
* Husain, Aliya. *Neither This nor That*. [S.l. ]: [s.n.], 2010. Print.
	+ This book explores the struggles of an American Muslim girl living in the United States.

Christianity:* <http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/christian.htm>
	+ This website gives basic information about Christianity and answers questions about the religion
* <http://www.philtar.ac.uk/encyclopedia/christ/index.html>
	+ This concept map shows how the different religions in Christianity have evolved. This would be a great resource to show students that Christianity has many different parts.
* L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*. New York: Square Fish, 2007. Print.
	+ This story follows a sister and brother on their search for their father who has been lost in time.

Judaism:* <http://library.thinkquest.org/28505/inde1.html>
	+ This website introduces the religion and talks about its central belief and important aspects of the religion such as its worships and practices, Synagogues, Torah, Sabbath, and much more.
* <http://www.jewfaq.org/shul.htm#Items>
	+ This website gives you basic information about Judaism and answers questions you may have about the religion.
* Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*. New York, NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell for Young Readers, 1998. Print.
	+ This story explores the story of two young girls, one Jewish and one German, during Nazis occupation of Denmark.
 | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion**** Buddhism: Buddhism began in the northeastern part of India over 2,500 years ago. It developed out of the teachings of Siddhatha Gautama who reach Enlightenment and assumed the title of Buddha. Buddhism focuses on suffering and the need to get rid of it. Buddhist do not believe in a god or gods like other religions; they see Buddha as a man who achieved Enlightenment. They believe that Nirvana is the most enlightened state one can achieve; in this state there is no suffering. This state can only be achieved after one is reincarnated several times and then finally releases their desires. Buddhist follow the teaching of Buddha in The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and Three Universal Truths.
* Hinduism: Hinduism originated in Indus River Valley in Northern India over 4000 years ago. It does not have a founder, a single teacher, or any other prophets. Hinduism is not just one religion. It is the practice of a variety of different religious groups that come from India. For Hindus, religion is more of what you do rather than what you believe in. Hindus believe in a universal soul or God called Brahman. Brahman takes many different forms, which is why Hindus worship different gods and goddesses. Hindus also believe in reincarnation and Karma, the idea that what you do in one life determines happiness in the next life, like the Buddhists.
* Islam: Islam is the second most popular religion in the world. The religion began in Arabia(Mecca) and was presented to man by the Prophet Muhammad. People who practice Islam are called Muslims. Muslims believe in only one god called Allah. Besides Muhammad, Muslims also believe in the prophets of Adam, Noah, Abraham, John the Baptist, and Jesus. What makes Muhammad different is that he proclaimed the Qur’an the Book of God. Muslims believe that the Qu’ran is the word of Allah. Muslims believe in the Five Pillars. The Five Pillars of Islam are duties that all Muslims must perform. These duties include declaration of faith (Shahadah), prayer (Salah), giving a fixed proportion of income to charity (Zakat), fasting during the month of Ramadan (Saum), and pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). There are different types of Muslims. Almost ninety percent are Sunnis, while the remaining are Shiites. They split after the death of Muhammad.
* Christianity: Christianity is the world’s largest religion with nearly 2.2 billion followers worldwide. It is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. They believe in only one God. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah mentioned in the Old Testament. He came to Earth to teach about love and fellowship and save humanity from its sins. He represents what all people should strive to be. Christians worship in churches and read the Bible. The bible is divided into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jewish and Muslim people also hold parts of the Old Testament as sacred. Christianity originally developed as a part of Judaism, since Jesus was a Jew. However, Jews do not believe Jesus was the Messiah.
* Judaism: Judaism is the oldest of the major religions, but has the fewest number of followers (12 million). The United States and Israel have the majority of the Jewish population. Judaism originated in Israel and the founder was Abraham. Abraham formed a covenant with God around 1812 BC. Like Christianity and Islam, Jews believe that there is only one God. Another important figure is Moses. Moses is important because he gave the Jews the Torah, which is the Jewish holy book that contains the teachings/laws of God. Jews worship in Synagogues and have spiritual leaders called Rabbis.
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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**** “The school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional.” (7)
* “Thus one of the first challenges for teachers and students alike is to examine what assumptions they harbor about religion generally and religious traditions in particular.” (11)
* There are four approaches to teaching religion: historical, literary, traditions-based, and cultural
* “it is imperative to foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty by encouraging students to” move away from generalizations, examine how their judgments affect others, and explore new ideas without fear. (11
* Make students aware of religious biases in the media.
* Teachers should supplement the textbook with a variety of outside resources.
 | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency**** I think before teaching about religion you need to show students what it means to be engaged in a respectful discussion about a topic. I think you should have students do a “test run” of engaging in a topic. You could pick something that interests the students like sports teams. The students could talk about the sports teams they like in a respectful, non-confrontational way. Explain to students that even though they may not like that team, it is important to be respectful to others.
* I think you need to learn from the four different approaches to teaching religion and try to incorporate a part of each of them into your teaching. By using each of the approaches, you can see religion in a variety of ways. This would be a best practice in teaching religion.
* In order to teach religion from multiple perspectives, you need to have multiple outside resources for students and yourself to use. This way students are able to get a fair representation of the different religions.

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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?**** I believe that I will follow the historical approach to teach religion. I will be teaching religion in a social studies class, so it only makes sense that I would take the historical approach. We will be examining religion when talking about different societies, so we will be looking at how that religion began and what it meant for the people in that society.
* Even though my focus will be a historical approach, that does not mean I cannot incorporate the three other approaches. I believe it is important to also show the students the literature, traditions and culture of the religion.

***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?**** Religion is a sensitive topic for many people. It is important to stress that fact that we are examining religion from an academic perspective, not a secular one. Looking at religion from an academic perspective meanings examining its facts. These facts include its history, traditions, literature, and impact on culture. By looking at these facts, we are NOT forcing ideas on anyone, we are not saying one religion is better than another. We need to stress to students that no matter what they believe, it is important to respect and be tolerant of everyone views. Although we stress the importance of tolerance, there will times when the discussion gets heated. As a teacher, we need to know who to manage those discussions when they arise and remind students that we are not attacking anyone’s religion and that we need to be respectful of everyone and their ideas.
 | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.**** One thing I would like to do with different lessons, would be to have students compare and contrast religions. I think they will find out that many of the religions have similar beliefs and backgrounds. For example, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all have the same background. However, as time progressed they developed into their own separate religions. I would be interesting to have students research why these splits in religion occurred.
* In order to address media literacy about religion, I would have students examine different articles and news clips to see if they notice any religious bias in the media. We would then take time as a class to talk about what the bias was and why we think the media does this. By being more aware of how the media sometimes depicts different religions, students will become more media literate.
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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 and pedagogy?**** After reading the AAR document, it really made me look at how I was going to teach religion in my classroom. It made me realize that I would be teaching religion in the context of other lessons and from a historical viewpoint. It showed me the importance of having a respectful classroom environment. Religion is very personal to some students. Before learning about religions, students need to know that we will be respectful of all religions and beliefs of others and that we are not saying one religion is better than another. It also helped me answer some tough questions I had about teaching religion. Religion in the classroom can be intimidating. However, by taking a look at religion through an academic lens rather than a secular one, students will become more religion literate. This will, in turn, make them more tolerant and respectful of others’ viewpoints and beliefs.
 | ***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.**** While examining the Indus River Valley culture, students will take an in-depth look at the how Hinduism began in the area. Students can research the beginnings of the religion. Students can then research about the architecture and art of the religion in the area. They will then compare the architecture and art of the past with the architecture and the art of the religion today. Students can examine the similarities and differences between the two. They can brainstorm why they are different or why they are similar. This will give students a look at the architecture and art and also show them that the religion is still every active in the area today.
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| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |