***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***  OACS History 6.4 Compare the geographic, political, economic and social characteristics of the river civilizations in the Tigris and Euphrates, Nile, Huang Ho and Indus valleys before 1000 B.C. including: location, government, religion, agriculture and cultural and scientific contributions.  OACS History 6.5 Describe the characteristics of Maya, Inca, Aztec and Mississippian civilizations including: location, government, religion, agriculture, and cultural and scientific contributions.  OACS People in Societies 6.1 Compare the cultural practices and products of the societies studied including: class structure, gender roles, beliefs, and customs and traditions.  OACS People in Societies 6.2 Compare world religions and belief systems focusing on geographic origins, founding leaders and teachings including: Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam.  OACS People in Societies 6.3 Explain factors that foster conflict or cooperation among countries: language, religion, types of government, historic relationships, and economic interests.  **Resources:**  **Islam:**  Khan, R, & Gallinger, P. (2002). *Muslim child: understanding islam through stories and poems*. Albert Whitman & Co.  <http://www.muslimkidsville.com/>  Wilkinson, P, & Salazar, B. (2005). *Islam*. DK Publishing (Dorling Kindersley).  **Hinduism:**    Ganeri, A. (2008). Krishna steals the butter and other stories.  Prime, R. (2005). *Hinduism*. Whitecap Books.  [http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religio n/hinduism.htm](http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religio%20n/hinduism.htm)    **Christianity:**  [**http://www.historyforkids.org/lear n/religion/christians/christianity.htm**](http://www.historyforkids.org/lear%20n/religion/christians/christianity.htm)  Wilkinson, P, & Teague, S. (2006). *Christianity*. Dk Pub.  Brown, A. (2005). *Christianity*. Whitecap Books.  **Judaism:**  Publishing, D. (2003). *Dk eyewitness books: judaism*. Penguin.  <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_juda.htm>  Schwabach, K. (2008). *A pickpocket's tale*. Yearling.  **Buddhism:**  Wilkinson, P, & Teague, S. (2003). *Buddhism*. Dk Pub.  <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_budd.htm>  Nhat, T, Ames, P, & Thi, N. (2010). *A pebble for your pocket*. Plum Blossom Books. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  Buddhism: Buddhism is a major global religion with a complex history and system of beliefs. The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Guatama, lived around 50 B.C. He was the son of an Indian warrior-king and lived an extravagant life, until he gave up everything to become a monk. He became known as the Buddha, which means the enlightened one. The Four Noble Truths comprise the essence of Buddha's teachings, though they leave much left unexplained. They are 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. More simply put, suffering exists; it has a cause; it has an end; and it has a cause to bring about its end. The notion of suffering is not intended to convey a negative world view, but rather, a pragmatic perspective that deals with the world as it is, and attempts to rectify it. The concept of pleasure is not denied, but acknowledged as fleeting. Pursuit of pleasure can only continue what is ultimately an unquenchable thirst. The same logic belies an understanding of happiness. In the end, only aging, sickness, and death are certain and unavoidable.  Judaism: Judaism is one of the oldest religions still existing today. It began as the religion of the small nation of the Hebrews, and through thousands of years of suffering, persecution, dispersion, and occasional victory, has continued to be a profoundly influential religion and culture.  Today, 14 million people identify themselves as Jews, and nearly 3.5 billion others follow belief systems directly influenced by Judaism (including Christianity, Islam, and the Bah'ai Faith). Modern Judaism is a complex phenomenon that incorporates both a nation and a religion, and often combines strict adherence to ritual laws with a more liberal attitude towards religious belief. Hinduism:  * Hinduism has commonly been viewed in the west as a ***polytheistic*** religion - one which worships multiple deities: gods and goddesses. Although a widespread belief, this is not particularly accurate. * Some have viewed it as a ***monotheistic*** religion, because it recognizes only one supreme God: the panentheistic principle of **Brahman**, that all reality is a unity. The entire universe is seen as one divine entity who is simultaneously at one with the universe and who transcends it as well. * Some view Hinduism as ***Trinitarian*** because Brahman is simultaneously visualized as a triad -- one God with three persons:   + **Brahma** the Creator who is continuing to create new realities   + **Vishnu**, (Krishna) the Preserver, who preserves these new creations. Whenever **dharma** (eternal order, righteousness, religion, law and duty) is threatened, Vishnu travels from heaven to earth in one of ten incarnations.   + **Shiva**, the Destroyer, is at times compassionate, erotic and destructive. * Strictly speaking, most forms of Hinduism are ***henotheistic***; they recognize a single deity, and recognizes other gods and goddesses as facets, forms, manifestations, or aspects of that supreme God.   Islam:  Islam was founded in 610 A.D. by a man named Mohammed. During Mohammed's time, polytheism reigned. His people were worshipping multiple gods. During one of Mohammed's trips as a trader, he had a vision from a being he perceived to be an angel who said, “There is only one God, and His name is Allah. Worship Him.”  “Islam has seven fundamental beliefs that every Muslim must accept as a part of his/her religion (the Emanul Mufassil, or Faith Listed in Detail). Every Muslim learns this formula as a part of his/her religious training.” \*   * “Belief in God” (the standard word for “God” in Arabic is الله—“Allah”) * “Belief in the angels” (both good and bad) * “Belief in the revealed Books of God” * Belief in God's many prophets” (including [Adam](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/adam.html), [Abraham](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/abraham.html), [Moses](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moses.html), [David](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html), and others Christians and Jews are familiar with) * “Accepting that there will be a Last Day” * Belief in the divine measurement of human affairs * Belief in life after [death](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/death.html)”   Muslims, also, believe in [Satan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/satan.html) and in a [Day of Judgment](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentthefinal.html) on which God will send people to either [heaven](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/heaven.html) or [hell](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hell.html). They also believe that [Ishmael](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ishmael.html) (the father of the Arab world), not [Isaac](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/isaac.html), received the promise from God through [Abraham](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/abraham.html); this helps to explain why Arab Muslims feel that their claim to the Holy Land is a God-given right.  Christianity:  With nearly two billion professed adherents worldwide, Christianity is currently the [**largest religion in the world**](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/fastfacts/stats.htm). It has dominated western culture for centuries and remains the majority religion of Europe and the Americas. [**Christian belief**](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/beliefs.htm) centers on the life of [**Jesus of Nazareth**](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/history/jesus.htm), a teacher and healer of first-century Palestine.  The primary source of information about the life of Jesus are the [Gospels](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/texts/gospels.htm), four books written by different authors 30-100 years after Jesus' death. The Gospels eventually became the first four books of the **[New Testament](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/texts/NT.htm)**.  The Gospels describe a three-year teaching and healing ministry during which Jesus attracted 12 close disciples and other followers who believed him to be the Messiah. This is the basis of Jesus' title "Christ," which comes from the Greek word for "Messiah."  Jesus' teachings focused on the themes of the kingdom of God, love of God and love of neighbor. Along with some of his teachings, his growing popularity with the masses was seen as dangerous by Jewish religious leaders and the Roman government, leading to his execution by crucifixion.  Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead three days after his burial, and in so doing made it possible for those who believe to be forgiven of sin and attain eternal life. Much of Christian belief and practice centers on the **[resurrection of Christ](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/resurrection_accounts.htm)**. The most distinctive belief of mainstream Christianity is the doctrine of the **[Trinity](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/beliefs/trinity.htm)**, which views the **[one God](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/beliefs/god.htm)** as consisting of three Persons: the Father, the Son (**[Christ](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/beliefs/christ.htm)**) and the **[Holy Spirit](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/beliefs/holy_spirit.htm)**. |
| ***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***  “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.”  “Most textbook authors employ a combination of the historical and traditions-based approaches in their coverage of religion, the latter typified by the ubiquitous chart in world history textbooks depicting several of the world’s religious traditions outlined and compared by categories.25 Minimally, teachers are encouraged to supplement such charts with culturally diverse and historically situated examples of religious practices that will help challenge the static and ahistorical depiction of religion that this common resource promotes.”  “As outlined in Part One, the distinction between the study of religion and religious devotional expression is rarely understood by those who have never been exposed to religious studies. Making this distinction clear to students before embarking on any lessons that relate to religion will  1. help them realize that learning about religion is a legal and appropriate undertaking for public schools, and  2. help them realize 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.”  “Brainstorming quickly can help students identify their most basic associations, those rooted in long experience and snap judgment. It is important to be explicit with students about why an examination of their assumptions is a critical first step in their learning. By explaining how biases and assumptions can act as a filter on new knowledge, they gain an important tool that they can return to again and again throughout their explorations about religion specifically and other topics more generally. In addition, by reflecting on their own preconceived ideas about religion, students can also think about how their ideas may stereotype and misjudge the beliefs and practices of others, including that of their own peers in the classroom or school.”  “Not everyone in the class is expected to agree. But students should understand that  • the goal is developing awareness and understanding; and  • accurate representations of traditions reduce the misunderstandings arising from false generalizations, bigotry, or valorization of a particular religious or non-religious worldview.”  “One general classroom strategy is to 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 and worldviews.” | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***  I would incorporate the first competency into my teaching by having whole class discussions about the world religions. During these discussions, I will need to be a positive role model for my students. I will provide guiding questions for the discussion. I will also need to show respect for every religion and those who practice those religions.  I would make sure I am following the second competency, by comparing each of my lesson plans to the list of best practices in social studies. I would include technology and literature in the classroom, and involve students in reflective thinking.  I would incorporate the third competency into my teaching by planning lessons that present each of the world religions positively. Each lesson needs to have innovative ways to present the information to students. |
| ***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 that I will most likely use a combination of the historical approach and the traditions-based approach. As history lessons are taught, I think it would benefit students to hear about the religions that were studied at that time. This would also set up the religious studies as purely academic because the religion ties into the history topic. I would begin with the historical approach to build students background knowledge of the religions. After the religions have been studied in the historical aspect, I would like to move on and use the traditions-based approach. During this approach, students could use venn diagrams and other graphic organizers to compare and contrast the different aspects of each world religion. Students could create a PowerPoint, podcast or report on a religion and share it with a class. Students could also participate in group/class discussions about the religions. Read-alouds could come from adolescent literature or resource books.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  From these competencies I understand that religion in the classroom needs to come from the secular academic approach. It is never okay to use your lessons to promote a certain religions, or to put down a religion. Teachers need to present each religion in a way for students to understand it. Tolerance and respect is a must for students and teachers need to make sure students are comfortable during their discussions. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  I can put the first competency in practice by always addressing religion in the classroom in the academic sense. This means closely monitoring students and their work. I will not present one religion as the “right” religion, and I will make sure that no student is pushing their religion onto another student. I can do this by monitoring discussions and group work closely, so that I can stop something as soon as it starts.  I can put the second competency in to practice by having students discuss important disagreements in their groups. As a teacher I will provide them with guiding questions to help them see both sides of the argument. I think by helping students see both sides of an argument they will be more understanding of other points of view. |
| ***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 this document, I definitely have a new opinion on incorporating world religions in the classroom. In order to incorporate world religions into the classroom, I would need to learn more about the different types of religions so that I am knowledgeable about them and can answer questions that students may have.  Students will need to be able to work in groups, have class/group discussions and complete work in a way that is respectful and tolerant. Before students have to discuss world religions, I think it would be helpful to have them familiar with what is acceptable beforehand.  I think that collaboration with other teachers would benefit a world religion unit. This way we could work together and share what is and is not working. I think that parents would appreciate a team effort and an update about what is going on in the classroom and what their child is studying. | ***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 think a lot of hands-on activities would be beneficial to make this information comprehensible to sixth grade students. One activity I think would be interesting for students is to complete a religion sort. This would be set up like a word sort, and the five heading would be the world religions. Students would then have facts that they would have to sort into the five religions. Students could work on this activity with groups, and this would help them talk with their peers about the religions.  Students could do research projects on a religion and turn their findings into a PowerPoint project to share with the class. With this presentation, they could write a reflective writing piece where they discuss what they have learned and what they still want to know.  Students could read books about these different religions in their language arts class during literacy circles. They could then discuss their book with their group and other groups. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |