***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 ONLS (specifically focusing on 6th grade social studies content), 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. Complete the Scavenger Hunt first (simply type responses in the boxes, or use other preferred format but you must address all components) and then you will participate in a Group Discussion (GD).

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| ***Pedagogical Competencies*** | ***Explore/Research/Reflect*** | ***Application*** |
| ***Station 1 (20 points)***   * Identify the ONLS 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.   Geography Strand. Topic: Human Systems. Statement 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). | ***Identify the ONLS. Then develop an annotated bibliography: Identify 3 Resources for each of the world religions(incl. young adolescent literature): Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism***  **Buddhism:**  Loundon, S. (2013). *Blue Jean Buddha.* Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.  This book provides real stories about young Buddhists and their experience with Buddhism. It has 33 first-person narratives about their life-stories, lessons, and struggles they have encountered. Students may be able to relate to these stories because they are told from teens and young adults about their lives.  O’Brien, B. (2014). *What Is Buddhism? An Introduction to Buddhism.* Retreived from <http://buddhism.about.com/od/basicbuddhistteachings/a/basicshub.htm>  This website describes what Buddhism is and how it is different from other religions. It mentions that Buddhism focuses on practice rather than the beliefs. This website describes the Four Nobel Truths (which are based on suffering). It also talks about the Eightfold Path, which is divided into three main sections: Wisdom, Ethical Conduct, and Mental Discipline. Near the end of the page, it clears up the common misconceptions that Buddhists believe in reincarnation and that they are all vegetarians.  PBS Basics of Buddhism. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>  As it is stated in the title, this website offers a basic description of what Buddhism entails. It notes that Siddhartha Guatama was the founder of Buddhism and that Buddha means “the Enlightened One”. It also describes the Four Nobel Truths- which simply means “suffering exists; it has a cause; it has an end; and it has a cause to bring about its end”. It also talks about Karma being the good or bad actions a person takes during their lifetime. If someone has good karma, it will lead them to have a fortunate rebirth. If someone has negative karma, it will lead them to have an unfortunate rebirth.  **Hinduism:**  Das, S. (2014). *How Do You Define Hinduism?* Retrieved from <http://hinduism.about.com/od/hinduism101/a/definition.htm>  Hinduism is the dominant faith of India. Hinduism is also known as Sanatana Dharma, which means everlasting or eternal religion, truth, or rule. It is a way of life based on the teachings of the ancient scriptures.  Kauai’s Hindu Monastery. (2014). Nine Beliefs of Hinduism. Retrieved from <https://www.himalayanacademy.com/readlearn/basics/nine-beliefs>  This website offers a summary of the nine beliefs of most Hindus. One belief is that there is one Supreme God. Most believe in the divinity of the four Vedas. They believe in karma and that the soul reincarnates until all karma has been resolved. Hindus believe that all life is sacred and no religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others. This website also acknowledges Hinduism to be the world’s oldest religion, as it does not have a specific starting date or a human founder.  Selven, M. (1996). *The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha.* United States of America: Linnet Books.  This book is a collection of stories about the pantheon of Hindu Gods, Ganesha. It is a collection of Hindu folktales for middle school students.  **Islam:**  Got Questions Ministry. (2014). *What is Islam and What Do Muslims Believe?* Retrieved from <http://www.gotquestions.org/islam.html>  This website described that Islam is the religion and the people are called Muslims. Muslims follow the teaching of the Qur’an and strive to keep the Five Pillars. Muslims believe in one Allah, angels, the prophets, the revelations of Allah, the last day of judgment, and the predestination. The Five Pillars of Islam include the testimony of faith, 5 ritual prayers each day, giving, fasting, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once in their lifetime.  Janson, M. (2014). *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.  This book explores how a movement that originated in South Asia could appeal to the local Muslim population - youth and women in particular - in a West African setting. The biographical narratives of five Gambian Tablighis provide an understanding of the ambiguities and contradictions young people are confronted with in their Muslim identity.  What is Islam About? (2014). *What is Islam?* Retrieved from <http://www.whatisislamabout.com/islam/what-is-islam/>  This website describes that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, yet it is also the most misunderstood. It describes what Islam is about and what Muslims believe in. It also says that Islam teaches the humans are born pure and sinless and that no one is responsible for sin. Muslims dress very modestly, and women are asked to cover their hair and wear loose clothing.  **Christianity:**  Burpo, T. (2010). *Heaven Is For Real.*  Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.  This book is a true story of a young boy who slips from consciousness during an emergency surgery and enters Heaven. He survives his surgery and eventually begins telling his family of his experience when he went to Heaven during that surgery. He describes the Trinity and the different people he met in Heaven that had passed away that he had never met on Earth.  Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry. (2014). *What is Christianity?* Retrieved from <http://carm.org/what-is-christianity>  This website describes that Christianity is a religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is stated that there is only one God- even though it is known as the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). It describes that God created Adam and Eve and they chose to sin in the Garden of Eden. This has caused all people to inherit the nature to sin and that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to save people’s sins. People following the teachings of Jesus Christ by reading the Bible.  Got Questions Ministry. (2014). *What is Christianity and What Do Christians Believe?* Retrieved from <http://www.gotquestions.org/Christianity.html>  This website gives an overview of what Christianity means. It is summarized that Christianity is a relationship with God as opposed to a list of “do’s and don’ts” of religious practice. It is said that Jesus died on the cross to save the sins of everyone. In order to be granted into heaven after death, a person must give themselves to God believe that Jesus died on the cross to save everyone’s sins.  **Judaism:**  About. (2014). *What Do Jews Believe?* Retrieved from <http://judaism.about.com/od/judaismbasics/a/whatdojewsbelieve.htm>  This website says Judaism is a monotheistic faith, which means that Jews believe there is only one God. Judaism teaches that every person is equally important and each has the potential to do good in the world. They believe The Torah is the most important text and it contains the 10 Commandments along with the 613 commandments as well. Judaism teaches that the Messiah (a person from God) will one day come and unite the world and bring peace to the people.  Got Questions Ministry. (2014). *What is Judaism and What Do Jews Believe?* Retrieved from <http://www.gotquestions.org/Judaism.html>  This website says there are five main forms Judaism in the world today. They are Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed, Reconstructionist, and Humanistic. A short list of the traditional beliefs of Judaism would include the following: God is the creator of all that exists. He alone is to be worshipped as absolute ruler of the universe. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible were revealed to Moses by God. God has communicated to the Jewish people through prophets. God monitors the activities of humans; He rewards individuals for good deeds and punishes evil.  Kukoff, L. (1999). *Introduction to Judaism: A Source Book.* Published by Urj Press.  This book is a good resource to teach an introduction to Judaism. It can be used to clear up any misconceptions about the religion. It can also be used to describe various traditions and explain the different holidays. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  Buddhism: Buddhism focuses on practice rather than the beliefs. Siddhartha Guatama was the founder of Buddhism and that Buddha means “the Enlightened One”. Buddhists believe in the Four Nobel Truths: suffering exists; it has a cause; it has an end; and it has a cause to bring about its end They also believe in the Eightfold Path, which is divided into three main sections: Wisdom, Ethical Conduct, and Mental Discipline. Buddhists also believe in Karma, which is the good or bad action a person takes during their lifetime. If someone has good karma, it will lead them to have a fortunate rebirth. If someone has negative karma, it will lead them to have an unfortunate rebirth.  Hinduism: Hinduism is said to be the world’s oldest religion, as it does not have a specific starting date or a human founder and it is the dominant faith of India. It is a way of life based on the teachings of the ancient scriptures. One belief is that there is one Supreme God. Most believe in the divinity of the four Vedas. They believe in karma and that the soul reincarnates until all karma has been resolved. Hindus believe that all life is sacred and no religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others.  Islam: Islam is the religion and the people are called Muslims. Muslims follow the teaching of the Qur’an and strive to keep the Five Pillars. Muslims believe in one Allah, angels, the prophets, the revelations of Allah, the last day of judgment, and the predestination. The Five Pillars of Islam include the testimony of faith, 5 ritual prayers each day, giving to charity, fasting during Ramadan, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once in their lifetime. Muslims dress very modestly, and women are asked to cover their hair and wear loose clothing.  Christianity:  Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and having a relationship with God. There is only one God- even though it is known as the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). All people inherited the nature to sin and Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to save people’s sins. In order to be granted into heaven after death, a person must give themselves to God believe that Jesus died on the cross to save everyone’s sins. There are several denominations within the religion of Christianity, each being a little different from one another.  Judaism:  Judaism is the belief in one God. Jews believe The Torah is the most important text. Similar to Christianity, Jews believe in the 10 commandments, but also believe in 613 commandments as well. Jews believe that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible were revealed to Moses and that God communicated to the Jewish people through the prophets. |
| ***Station 2 (15 points)***   * (a) Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others. * (b) Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion. * (c) 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***  1a) “The school *educates* about all religions, it does not *promote or denigrate* religion” (pg 8). This means that students need to learn about the all of the religions, not just their own religion. Also, the teacher needs to make sure that his/her own opinions (or the opinions of the students in the class) about a specific religion do not change the other students’ views.  2a) “Foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty by encouraging students to move away from making generalizations, examine how their judgments may impact others, and explore ideas and ask questions without fear” (pg 12). This statement is pretty self-explanatory. Students need to feel safe to discuss the various religions and even share their own religious views to help other students understand a religion that may be different than their own.    1b) Religions are Internally Diverse (collaborative/interactive). This best practice may work especially well in a classroom with little diversity. My reason behind this idea is that students who have similar religious backgrounds can work together to discuss the similarities and differences *within* their religion.  2b) The Literary Approach (multi-disciplinary). Students can read religious texts to help them understand a specific religion better or it can be used as a springboard for a group/class discussion.    1c) “Teaching about religion gives credibility to religion itself as a valid field of inquiry and assumes the legitimacy of multiple religious perspectives” (pg 8). This means that by teaching *about* religion from a non-devotional standpoint, it makes it easier to teach about religions without putting more or less emphasis on one religion over another.  2) “Learning about religion through a religious studies framework that is non-devotional, inclusive, and comparative in both form and function” (pg 4). This means present the religions without encouraging one religion over another. Don’t force someone to practice a certain religion or change their beliefs because of this class. | ***How can incorporate this into your teaching of world religions? Provide at least 1 example for each competency***  (a) Setting up the environment for having a class discussion is very critical when religion is the topic of discussion. Students need to know that they are not being forced to talk personally about their own religious beliefs; instead it should be done voluntarily. Students should feel comfortable discussing religion with an open mind and not be afraid of any type of repercussions due to personal beliefs. Students need to be reminded that learning about the different religions is not saying that one religion is superior over another or that their religion is incorrect. The ultimate reminder to students should be that the study of religion is for understanding it, not for agreement with each religion.  b). There are often different denominations within a religion and each group has a slightly different view on practices and traditions. If possibly, have students work together based on their overall religious background to uncover these differences within their religion. This will help them have a better understanding of the internal diversity.  c) Have students work in small groups to research the facts of a given religion. Provide specific questions for students to answer so that it does not lead too deeply into personal beliefs, instead just describes the religion and how a person practices those beliefs in a given religion. |
| ***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 will most likely follow the Literary Approach because it seems to be the most logical way of including religion in social studies. There are many different texts available for students to use to incorporate religion and reading together. It is extremely important for me as the teacher to be knowledgeable about the religion before having the students read about it though. It will be important to clear up any misconceptions about the religion instead of allowing students to continue on with their misconception.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***   * As students disagree about their beliefs and have a hard time deciding which religion is correct or supreme, it is my job to remind students that our goal of the class is not to come to an agreement about the religions, instead our goal is just to have an understanding of the various religions. * Use the students with various religious backgrounds to help inform the rest of the class about the different religions. If there is a lack of diversity among the religions, you can use it to have students of the same religion uncover the diversity within the religion internally. * We need to encourage students not to make generalizations about a given religions. We need to encourage them to put themselves in someone else’s shoes and think about the impact that their statements might have on other. Also, students need to feel open to explore ideas and ask questions without fear of embarrassment or ridicule. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  In Social Studies, I will incorporate a book study about a given religion, which will be a springboard for a class discussion. Upon completion of the book, we will discuss the details of the religion and clear up any misconceptions of the religion.  Another idea is to incorporate literature circles where each group is assigned a different religious book. Students can discuss in their group the details of the religion. If there are any students in the group that believe in the religion that they were assigned to, they can help the group discover any discrepancies between the book and the beliefs of their religion. They can also make a class Venn diagram to show similarities and differences between any of the given religions. |
| ***Station 4 : Final Reflection***  ***10 points*** | ***Reflect on the AAR document –what impact did these guidelines have on your professional development, pedagogy and thinking about teaching social studies?***  The AAR guidelines expressed a valid reason about why it is essential for teachers to teach students about the various religions. If we continue to allow religion illiteracy, we are encouraging prejudice and ill feelings, which obstructs our goal of having respect for diversity. Although it is not a guarantee that prejudice will be eliminated, at least it will keep us from encouraging students to have uninformed thoughts and make comments that degrade the different religions.  When teaching about the various religions, it is imperative that we set up a safe classroom where students are encouraged to speak freely without fear of what other students might say. It is also very important to remember the guidelines for teaching about religion. Teachers need to remember that religion in school is for academic purposes, not devotional. The school needs to educate about all religions, not promote a specific religion. Also, students need to study about the religions, not be forced to practice a certain religion.  While learning about the various religions, it is important that students understand that religions continually evolve and change. They are not necessarily a permanent set of values and ideas. Students need to be made aware that religions are often diverse within the religion itself. Not every single person practices or believes the exact same way even within the same religion. Religions are also embedded into a culture, which makes it that much more important for students to learn about the various religions. “Religions are influenced by cultures while also influencing cultures” (p. 14). Teachers need to instill the idea and encourage students not to rely solely on media and websites such as Wikipedia to gain knowledge about these religions, as many of these sources are often biased or flawed. All in all, it is very important for teachers to remind students that the goal of learning about the different religions is to understand them, not to encourage one’s beliefs about one religion over another. | ***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 studying about each of the river valley civilizations, have students look for the religion that is commonly associated with each civilization. Students can create (or complete) a graphic organizer to identify the geographic origins of each religion, information about the founding leaders, the common beliefs of each religion, type of building for worship, and lasting influences in the modern world for each religion. Students can keep this graphic organizer and continually add information to it as the unit progresses. Upon completion, students can use this graphic organizer to compare and contrast two or more different religions. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |