***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. | ***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***  **Theme**:  Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere  **Strand:**  Geography  **Topic**: Human Systems:  **Content 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).  **Annotated Bibliography**  **Buddhism**  Nagaraja, D. (2010). *Buddha at bedtime: Tales of love and wisdom for you to read with your child to enchant, enlighten and inspire.* London, England: Duncan Baird Publishers.  A compilation of long and short bedtime stories that are modern re-tellings of ancient Buddhist tales. The book is written in a way to be accessible to children.  Senker, C. (2004). *My Buddhist year: A year of religious festivals.* London, England: Hodder & Stoughton.  This book follows a child through a year of Buddhist religious celebrations including Hana Matsuri and Wesak. The book illustrates these celebrations though religious articles, buildings, symbols, food, and clothing.  PBS. (nd). *Buddhism: An introduction*. Retrieved July 11, 2015 from http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm  This factual website provides an overview of Buddhism. It may serve as a starting point to give students a general idea about the religion.  **Hinduism**  Novesky, A. (2004).*Elephant prince: The story of Ganesh.* San Rafael, CA: Insight Kids.  This illustrated children’s book recounts the story of how the Hindu god Ganesh came have an elephant head.  Jania, M. & Jania V. (2005). *What you will see inside a Hindu temple.* Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths.  This nonfiction book shows pictures with explanations of what the inside of a Hindu temple looks like and what objects are used for spiritual practices.  Senker, C. (2004). *My Hindu year: A year of religious festivals.* London, England: Hodder & Stoughton.  This book follows a child through a year of Hindu religious celebrations. This will help students understand more about the customs of religions and see them as more than words on the calendar.  **Islam**  Senker, C. (2004). *My Muslim year: A year of religious festivals.* London, England: Hodder & Stoughton.  This book follows a child through a year of Muslim religious celebrations including Ashura and Ramadan. This will help students understand more about the customs of religions and see them as more than words on the calendar.  Religion Facts. (nd). *Islam*. Retrieved July 12, 2015 from <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam>  This website provides basic information about Islam including its central tenets, history, and beliefs. It would be a good starting point to introduce students to Islam.  Budhos, M. (2006). *Ask me no questions.* New York, NY: Scholastic.  This nonfiction story recounts life for Muslim Americans following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Muslim men were frequently suspected of being terrorists and life did not continue normally for their families.  **Christianity**  BBC. (2014). *Christianity*. Retrieved July 14, 2015, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/>  This well-organized website allows students to access information on Christianity by clicking on subtopics of interest instead of wading through pages of words. Students who are fact-seeking will appreciate this feature.  Wagner, R. (2004). *Christianity For Dummies.* New York, NY: For Dummies Publishing.  As with all books in the For Dummies series, this book assumes that the reader is not familiar with most aspects of this religion. I think that a project-based collaborative activity could be for students to create their own “For Dummies” books. One group could write Islam for Dummies and so on.  Miller, S. M. (2012). *Who’s who and where’s where in the Bible 2.0.* Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, Inc.  This book is organized in a dictionary format. Entries for people and places from the Bible are enhanced with illustrations, photos, maps, and information. These features given context to the details of this Christian holy book.  **Judaism**  Senker, C. (2004). *My Jewish year: A year of religious festivals.* London, England: Hodder & Stoughton.  This book follows a child through a year of Jewish religious celebrations including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Hanukkah. With clear pictures and explanations, this book will help students understand more about the customs of Judaism and see their holidays as more than words on the calendar.  Safavi, A. (2015). *Jewish culture for beginners*. New York, NY: AidinSafavi Publishing.  This is a straightforward book that introduces Judaism as a religion and also as a way of life, a culture. It includes chapters on Jewish customs, Jewish food, Jewish symbols, and Jewish holidays.  United Religions Initiative. (nd). *Judaism: Background, basic beliefs, and sacred texts.* Retrieved July 14, 2015, from <http://www.uri.org/kids/world_juda_basi.htm>  This website’s target audience is non-Jewish children who are curious about Judaism. The website explores the origin of Judaism, the beliefs of the Jewish people, and the texts that are considered sacred by the Jewish people. | ***Write a short description highlighting key points of each religion***  **Buddhism**  Buddhism is based on striving for greater understanding and personal spirituality. Buddhism does not have gods or other deities. The goal of Buddhism is to seek Enlightenment and achieve Nirvana. Siddhartha Gautama and his initial quest for Enlightenment were the founding of the religion. Buddhist believe that everything is changing and impermanent and that reincarnation allows people to travel through life again and again.  **Hinduism**  Hinduism is an umbrella term for several religious traditions practiced primarily in India and Nepal. There is no one founder or book. The Veda is a commonly used sacred text. Many Hindus use a value system known as dharma. Most believe in a supreme God with characteristics from many deities. Karma is thought to rule the reincarnation cycle.  **Islam**  People who practice the religion of Islam as called Muslims. Many Muslims live in the Middle East and North Africa. They worship a single god called Allah. Their worship building is called a Mosque. The holy book of Islam is the Quran or Koran. Prophets are messengers of God. Muslims strive to do Allah’s will and expect paradise after death.  **Christianity**  Christianity is the most practiced religion in the world. Many Christians live in Europe, North America, and South America. There are numerous denominations of Christianity. All believe in a single God. The holy book of Christianity is the Bible. Christians strive to glorify God and enjoy Him.  **Judaism**  People who practice Judaism are known as Jews. Jews believe there is one God. Abraham is the founder of the Jewish religion. Jews believe that God promised to care for them in exchange for their obedience. They believe God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The Jewish law is set forth in the Torah. |
| ***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**  Lead students in examining their own assumptions.  Guide students away from making generalizations and instead making qualified statements.  Demonstrate how judgments impact others  **Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.**  Begin with a religion or worldview that students are familiar with before moving on to one that is less familiar  Religion does not exist in a vacuum; connect religion to history, geography, government.  **Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.**  Encourage students to see the diversity within a single religion. Not all Christians believe the same things or engage in the same religious practices. Diversity occurs within a worldview as well as between worldviews.  Examine a religion from the vantage point of architecture or day-in-the-life-of-a-common-person in order to have a different perspective that might be more removed from students’ tightly held beliefs. | ***How can 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 think that project-based learning would be beneficial for students to explore religious beliefs and practices. Students need to go beyond reading the textbook and create their own inquiry to fully understand world religions.   **Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.**   * Collaborative learning is a best practice that would help students be able to discuss religious practices and beliefs. It would fit nicely with a project-based learning experience.   **Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.**   * Student choice in mode of presentation would be allow for the presentation of multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way. Students could incorporate Artifact Boxes for a particular religion and highlight the aspects that are most salient of that worldview. |
| ***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 likely follow the Historical Approach to teaching religion. This approach fits best in the existing social studies structure at my school. It meets the needs and expectations of my district. If I were teaching in an ideal world, I would likely follow the Cultural Studies Approach. This approach builds upon the other three approaches and enhances student understanding. This approach seems to pull together the most ideas and give the most context for religions. However, it also takes time to instruct in this manner and less content can be covered. Thus, I would only be using this approach in an ideal situation.  ***What do you understand by the competencies in Station 3?***  The competencies in this station set the teacher up to be successful and minimize uncomfortableness and conflict. The first competency ensures that the teacher knows the difference between teaching religion personally and with focus on the devotional aspects and teaching about religion as an academic subject. The second competency tells us that students will have conflicts and that the teacher needs to be prepared to address these conflicts as academic discussions, not personal attacks or disagreements with one “right” answer. Conflicts should leave the students with a greater understanding of the material. The teacher must anticipate that students will have a variety of religious backgrounds and religious beliefs. Given this, the teacher must foster an atmosphere of respect where questions are welcome. Intolerance will not be accepted. | ***How will you implement your approach/understanding of competencies into practice? Provide at least 2-3 specific examples.***  I would set my expectations clearly. In advance of this unit, I would have a team meeting in which students share concerns about the upcoming unit and brainstorm solutions. This would be an opportunity for students to acknowledge that they have a diverse set of religious beliefs and backgrounds. I would have students draft a list of appropriate behaviors and interactions. We would discuss the importance of avoiding generalities about religions and the likelihood for disagreement in the classroom. We would create a letter to families explaining the purpose of our studies and the expectations for student behaviors in our safe classroom environment. We would outline how disagreements will become learning opportunities. Students would start the religious studies units with an appropriate mindset.  Before teaching this unit, I would need to check my own beliefs and separate myself from them in the classroom. Too often it is tempting to answer a student question based on personal beliefs instead of referring the student to the texts or resources being used. My role would be most effective as a facilitator who is learning about aspects of religion along with the students. |
| ***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 document was enlightening. When I am asked to teach world religions, I will definitely be reviewing this document. The writers of this document clearly understand the fears and insecurities of teachers new to this content. They address those areas and provide specific recommendations. The AAR document provides answers for teachers who are questioned by parents or students about the need for teaching religion in a secular classroom. | ***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.***  From reading the AAR document, I see that my students need to be respectful, engaged learners. I would like for my students to complete project-based learning in collaborative groups. The end product would be the presentation of their learning to an audience that is not familiar with the religion. This may be an iMovie, an interactive poster, process drama, or a collection of artifacts with explanations. I also considered doing a Gallery Walk, but with students presenting a particular religion at each stations. The students “touring” the gallery walk could have Passports or guided handouts with information that they need to collect from each station/religion. |
| ***Total: 60 points*** |  |  |