

What issues related to religion are challenging in your school or classroom?

Write them on your 3 x 5 card.

Religion . . . It's Throughout the Framework, but not a Problem with These Guidelines



Constitutional
Rights
Foundation
Educate. Participate.

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Religion is the diversity/cultural topic that is rarely discussed but potentially the most divisive in a public school setting.

...Why not just skip it?



Why Teaching About Religion is Important

Much of history, art, music, literature, and contemporary life is incomprehensible without an understanding of the major religious ideas and influences that have shaped culture throughout the world.



California Three Rs Project (CA3Rs)

Began in early 1990s to address public and school concerns about the proper place of religious liberty & study of religion in public schools.

3Rs Project is a partnership between the California County Superintendents Education Services Committee (CCSESA) and the Religious Freedom Center at the Newseum.



Administered by the Constitutional Rights Foundation.

California 3Rs Project Rights, Responsibility, Respect

- **Rights**: Freedom of conscience is an inalienable right.
- **Responsibility**: Freedom of conscience is a universal right joined to a universal duty to protect that right for others.
- **Respect**: We will always disagree but must do so in a manner that respects others' freedoms.



California 3Rs Project Rights, Responsibility, Respect

GOAL:

To live with (and understand) our deepest differences in public schools.

Use the 3Rs in implementing the Framework!



Three factors influence how schools deal with religion in the curriculum and on campus:

1. Content Standards & Framework
2. First Amendment
3. Diversity and Religiosity of American Society



Factor #1

Content Standards &
Framework

Religion and the Curriculum

World History

– 6th & 7th grades most difficult

- Ancient Hebrews, Greek & Roman gods, early Hinduism, Chinese religion/philosophy, early Christianity, Islam, Sikhism
- Early humankind (evolution), Christian Byzantium, expansion of Muslim empires, Catholic governance in the Middle Ages, Crusades, Protestant Reformation, wars of religion, religious connection to colonization, adaptation of religion to culture

– 10th grade

- Challenges to divine right of kings, religion and law, causes/results of European imperialism in Middle East, Asia, and Africa related to religion and culture, religious persecution, Holocaust, creation of modern Israel, religious extremism

Religion and the Curriculum

U.S. & California History

Native American spiritual beliefs/religions, religion and founding, roles of organized religion in colonial life, challenges of religious diversity, Constitutional frame for religion & public life
Manifest Destiny, migration & religious diversity, religion and social reform/civil rights

Government/Civics

Evolution of First Amendment, key constitutional court cases, contemporary debates with religious dimensions

Art, Literature & Primary Sources

Framework Appendices

- Part of the Key Themes - #7

Spiritual Life and Moral Codes

- How have ideas of morality and spirituality shaped history?
- How has human spirituality changed in the course of history
- What is the relationship between religion and science?

Framework Appendices

Appendix E: Religion and History-Social Science

- The school's approach to religion is academic, *not devotional*.
- The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does *not* press for student *acceptance* of any religion.
- The school sponsors study about religion, *not the practice* of religion.
- The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may *not impose* any particular *view*.
- The school educates about all religions; it *does not promote or denigrate* religion.
- The school informs students about various beliefs; it *does not seek to conform* students to any particular *belief*.

Factor #2

First Amendment

CA3Rs' Work Based on the First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .



CA3Rs' Work Based on the First Amendment

U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights provide a framework for how people can live together peacefully in one of the most diverse societies in the world.

**KEY ELEMENT OF CIVIC EDUCATION &
A CLASSROOM TOOL**



Academic Study of Religion

Constitutional line between

learning about religion (*legal*)

and

practicing religion (*not legal*)

- Teacher/administrator cannot lead religious practice in a public school
 - Can't lead a prayer
 - Only use religious artifacts as part of an academic lesson
 - Shouldn't "look like" practice (NO simulations)
- Use academic sources
 - check publisher/author so materials are not from religious group
 - Read, view, analyze with an academic purpose



Academic Study of Religion

Constitutional line between

learning about religion (*legal*)

and

practicing religion (*not legal*)

- Religious studies/historians as speakers
 - Don't invite clergy to present lessons about religion
 - Don't ask students to describe their religious beliefs in class
 - Webinars becoming available from American Academy of Religion scholars
- Remember religious beliefs & rituals evolve
 - Particularly important for 6th & 7th grade teachers
 - Need to remember that the concept "Christian" is recent. 16th – early 20th c. people identified themselves by their sect, conflict between sects was common



Academic Study of Religion

Constitutional line between

learning about religion (*legal*)

and

practicing religion (*not legal*)

- Learn about many religions (applies holidays, too)
 - Part of new Framework
 - Don't skip topics because you disagree with those beliefs
- Use careful language & symbols
 - Some Buddhists... (attribution)
 - Story vs myth (choice of words)



Factor #3

Diversity and Religiosity of American Society

Pew Survey of Religious Knowledge 2013

- Knowledge level about religion is VERY low, even for people who attend worship regularly.
Most knowledgeable are: Atheists/Agnostics, followed by Jews, and Mormons.
- Major social consequences for this lack knowledge
- Goal of Framework inclusion of religion is to change this outcome



Campus Issues Related to Religion

This is an ever changing arena...

– Schools and religious holidays

- Calendar
- Expectation of students/parents on “proper activities”
- Which to observe and which to skip
- Yoga and mindfulness practices

– Clubs and student activities

- Day of Silence/Day of Truth
- Religious and atheist clubs
- Boy Scouts



Campus Issues Related to Religion

- This also changes based on court rulings...
 - Student & teacher religious rights
 - Garb
 - Prayer, moment of silence
 - Display of sacred objects
 - Proselytizing
 - Opt in/out of curriculum topics and activities
 - Attendance
 - Pledge of Allegiance



What the 3Rs Project Does

- Presentations and meetings with school leaders
- Resources
 - Website: **CA3RsProject.org**
 - Database of lessons and resources
 - Quarterly bulletins on hot topics
- Professional Development
 - Professional development sessions on teaching about religion, dealing with religious liberty, content sessions on world religions (live and webcast)
- Student Programs
 - Facilitate participation in a student to student international video conferencing project called “Face to Faith”



ca3rsproject.org

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