***How To Teach About Religion In Public Schools***

***The 8-Step Teacher Lesson Guide®***

*A teacher is mandated to teach about religion in all grade levels in public schools.*

*Adopted textbooks are generally inadequate for teaching about religion.*

*Content standards define what but not how to teach about religion.*

*The following guidelines will assist a teacher in planning and teaching about religion.*

*Step One: Identify the grade level content standard(s), strand(s), and/or educational code(s) you will be using.*

*Guideline #1*

*Refer to list of strands, content standards, and/or educational codes provided on the supplemental resource guide. Teach only a lesson that is connected to these guides. State the standard in the lesson for professional referencing.*

*Step Two: Present your introduction and reason for the lesson clearly and precisely.*

*Guideline #2*

*Do not interject personal interpretation or bias regarding the purpose or the materials to be used in the lesson. Your tone and professional posturing should be objective and appropriate while underscoring both the purpose and the content of the lesson, noting religion’s historical significance and importance.*

*Step Three: Understand why you are teaching the lesson and what students need to know.*

*Guideline #3*

*The lesson’s purpose and instructional objective—avoid any personal intent and clearly understand your motive for teaching the lesson. Connect the lesson’s objective(s) and purpose to state content and materials when designing your lesson. State the lesson’s objective clearly, exactly as you have written it, and readily available for students to read during the lesson.*

*Step Four: Choose which method and style of instruction you will be using during your delivery of the content information and your choice of materials in lesson design.*

*Guideline #4*

*Keep the information within the lesson historically accurate and without private interpretation, disposition, or slant to a particular conclusion. Your words and demeanor should be without endorsement or criticism of a particular belief. Be careful to instruct in a non-indoctrinating manner free of personal beliefs and attitudes that are deeply held by you.*

*Step Five: Model expected outcomes for students’ competencies and behavior.*

*Guideline #5*

*Do not stray from your lesson’s objective in promoting understanding and appreciation for religion. Tone is important here—keep clear of any prejudice through choice of words or gestures. Be sure that students understand that references to religious faiths are not intended to endorse or criticize religious beliefs when demonstrating professional, academic, or personal knowledge about the lesson’s content material, purpose, or expected student outcome(s).*

*Step Six: Determine the level of understanding you will expect from students.*

*Guideline #6*

*What you expect your students to do should reflect the content and purpose of the lesson. Stay with the facts of the lesson and the designated outcomes. It is not about your likes or dislikes. A teacher may neither advance nor inhibit religious faiths but may ask the students to understand the importance of religious beliefs and how they have impacted American culture and historical events. Students are to understand the significant role and the historical impact of religion but are not to be encouraged to accept a particular belief as their own.*

*Step Seven: Establish how you will support students through the “guided practice” of the lesson.*

*Guideline #7*

*Stay unbiased and non-proselytizing. You should not be persuasive to the point of being perceived as promoting a particular belief you believe in or rejecting/ridiculing a religious belief you yourself do not embrace. A student should once again know and understand various belief systems and their impact upon society but not be persuaded to believe a certain way.*

*Step Eight: Define what students will do to demonstrate that they have sufficient understanding of the material and the objective(s) of the lesson.*

*Guideline #8*

*You want students to be able to express their religious beliefs in a protective and tolerant atmosphere, free from peer ridicule and school officials’ criticism. Students will want to share what they think and believe. You should be polite and respectful, objective and historically accurate, accepting and tolerant of diverse views and comments. They should be assessed on knowing the facts and understanding the importance religion has played in history.*

*Note: Remember you are to be neutral, objective, unbiased, not hostile or coercive. Your lesson must have a clear secular purpose, not indoctrinating or proselytizing, neither advancing nor inhabiting religion. Students’ freedom of religious expression should not be limited or restricted, but they should grasp the importance of religion in American life. Students need to understand the role and significance religion has played in our culture, our laws, and the lives of our citizens. As a teacher, you must teach about religion and its influences in American history. Do not be afraid, unprepared, or unprofessional—religious freedoms are the reason for teaching about religion.*